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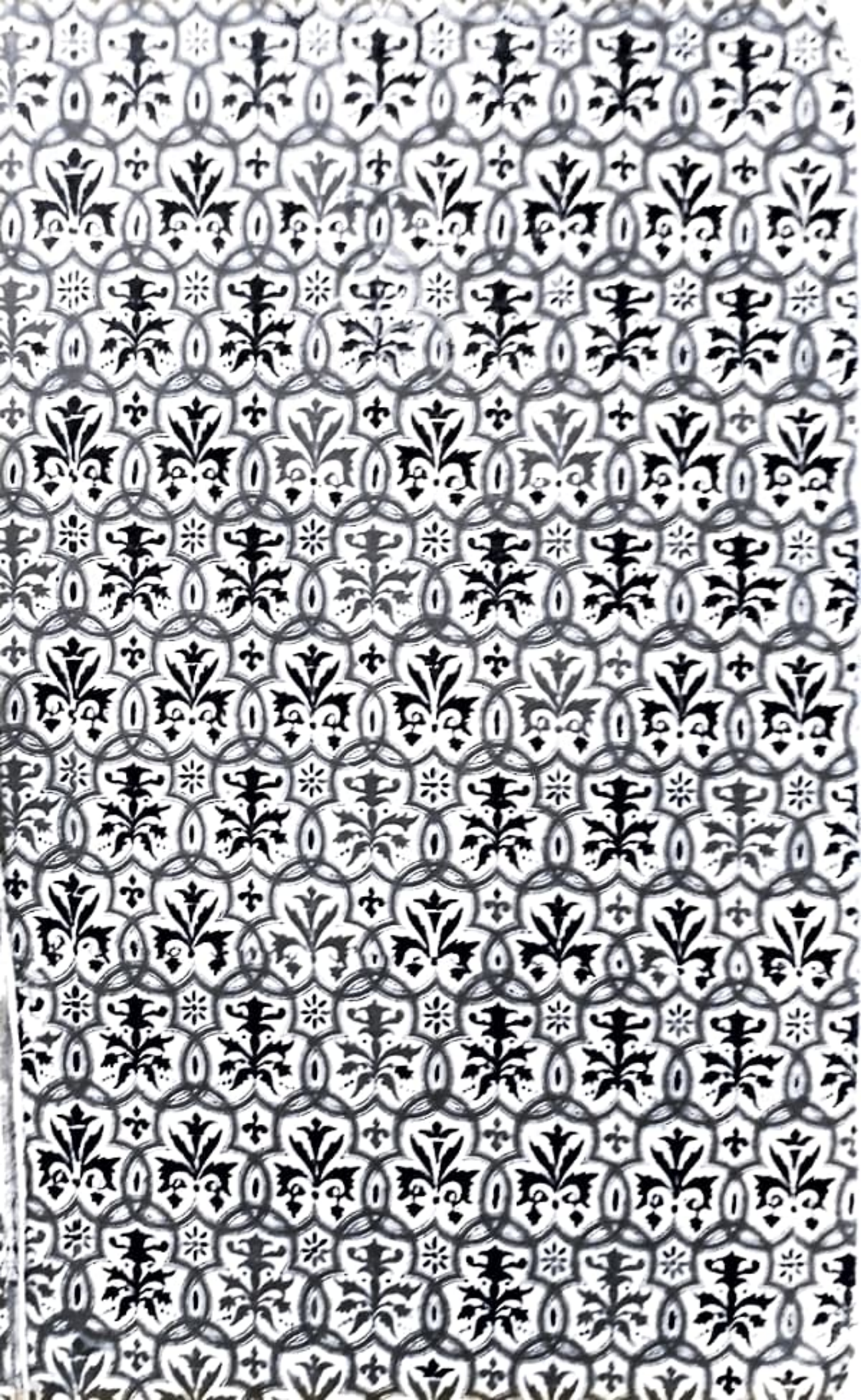

THE BASKET BEARER. PAGE 64

PHILIP ECKERT'S

STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS.

A Story for Boys.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARGARET CLAIRE."

FIRST
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'It is not in the summer-tide of life
That the heart hoards its treasures. . . .
For sadness teaches us the truth of things
Which had been hid beneath the crown of flowers
Which gladness wears; and the few silent hours
Of quiet, heavenward thought which sorrow brings,
Are better than a life in pleasure's bowers,
Drinking the poisonous chalice which she pours
To quench our heavenlier spirit's murmurings."

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PHILIP ECKERT'S

STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS.

I.

The Old and New Year.

THE wind, which had been blowing cold all day, grew bitter with the night; and though 'twas New Year's Eve, the usually crowded thoroughfares were almost deserted.

Now and then might one have been seen hurrying along, his face half-buried in the folds of an ample cloak; or a troop of merry boys perhaps, who, braving the cold, had met to sing a parting song to

[illegible]

the dying year, their teeth chattering as they sang.

But though it was cold, bitter cold, without, the brightness which shone from almost every window told of the warmth and comfort within-doors. There were glad hearts in hundreds of happy homes on this the last night of the good old year: and if perchance the light of some one happy homes had been dimmed by misery and want, surely they were far off—away down in the narrow courts and alleys of the great city, where pinching poverty and gnawing care delight to hide themselves.

So cold was it this winter night, that even the beggars had deserted the broad streets for the miserable shelter of their

garret or cellar; yet still remained one little girl, who, standing before a brilliantly-lighted mansion, gazed upon the light, as though the mere sight of it might impart warmth to her trembling form. She was a very little child, with a wistful look on her pale, sad face: but she seemed to forget herself and her troubles, whatever they might be, as she gazed upon the bright scene before her.

It was a party for the old year and the new: and as one coach after another drew up, and their gaily-dressed occupants passed through the spacious doorway, still brighter flashed the light upon the surrounding darkness, while sounds of sweet music floated out upon the frosty air.

"But it's cold out here!" murmured the child to herself, as the wind blew sharply round the corner; and, emerging from her hiding-place, she turned her face again into the darkness.

Madge Eckert had not always been so forlorn and sad. Once she had known a mother's love—that love which can make the humblest home a happy one.

Sometimes, even now, in her dreams, she sat again on the dear old door-step, watching the fading day; or wandered with her brother Philip along the pebbly brook and through the lonely dells where wild flowers grew.

But those days were gone forever; yet their memory came over her again, on this the last night of the old year; and as

she looked up in her loneliness to the quiet stars, tender recollections of the mother who now slept in the far-off village church-yard, filled her heart with sadness and her eyes with tears. "Mother, dear mother!" sighed the child; and again she raised her tearful eye to the starry heavens, and tried to think of her as *there*, not here. Somehow the stars always brought little Madge comfort; she could not tell why, but they seemed like friends to the lonely child—friends faithful and true; and as they smiled down upon her lovingly this bitter night, her step grew lighter, and a look of patient waiting came into her sweet, sad face.

Creation's dawn was heralded by the song of the "morning stars;" and "that

midnight hour that hallowed earth forever as the human birth-place of heaven's eternal King," was brightened by the silvery light of the Star of Bethlehem. Blessed stars! To how many have ye been like "ministering spirits," leading the worn and weary to look beyond the shadows of earth, even beyond your own mild radiance, up to the eternal brightness of the "many mansions," where the night of sin and sorrow never draws its veil, and where "all tears are wiped away!"

I.

Waiting and Starting.

WHEN Philip and Madge Roberts were left motherless, a gloomy shadow fell upon their young lives.

The father, who should have taken his sorrowing children to his heart, turned coldly from them, and naught seemed left but the remembrance of their mother's farewell words and parting blessing.

And they were words never to be forgotten—words of faith and hope; earnest, loving, trusting words, and they sank deep in hearts made impressible by a

first great sorrow. And when a more bitter grief, even the knowledge of a father's sin and fall, bowed their heads still lower with shame, young as they were, they rejoiced that she whom they mourned had been taken from the evil to come.

A few months after the death of Mrs. Eckert, their pleasant little cottage, about which clustered so many happy memories, passed into other hands; and the brother and sister became unwilling inmates of a crowded tenement-house in a neighboring city.

Here, their unprincipled and selfish father, surrounded by vice and evil companions, very soon found his level. Rapidly he sank, dragging down with him-

self his innocent children, to disgrace and misery.

And when, without a word of preparation, he introduced to their already wretched home a coarse and ignorant woman, and bade his children call her mother, their cup of sorrow seemed full indeed.

A few weeks after, as Philip left the house early one morning, he drew little Madge after him into the street, and when quite alone whispered, significantly, "Don't go to sleep to-night, Madge, before I come,—I shall have something to say to you."

"Oh! tell me now, Philip," begged the child, alarmed by his mysterious manner and excited look.

"No,—I can not; wait till to-night, and I will tell you all," and, stooping, he folded his little sister in his arms a moment, then turned and hurried away, as though afraid to trust himself to speak another word. There was an undefined dread, a "fear of fearful things," on the child's spirit as she crept away to her little garret room that night; but again she caught sight of the starry heavens, and the brightness still above her soothed her to a patient waiting on Him, under the shadow of whose wings she had come to trust.

Madge Eckert had listened to the Saviour's voice, bidding the little children "come," and obeying, child though she was, He had received her graciously, and

owning her for His own, had written her name in His Book of Life. And now, in her hours of loneliness and fear, she could put her trembling hand in His and whisper, "Lord, remember me;" and He who "gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom," never forgot little Madge, but ever led her along safely, though the way sometimes seemed rough and dark.

Madge lay watching her favorite stars a long, long while before stillness settled down upon the crowded tenement-house. She listened to her father's loud voice and heavy tread, and more than once started up in affright at the sounds of riot from the noisy street. But at length all was still; then Philip came. Noiselessly he

crept up to her little garret, and softly stepped across the floor.

"How late you are to-night, Phil," she whispered, as her brother sat down wearily by her low bed; "have you been working all this time?"

"Yes, but 'twas to get you these," he replied, holding up a pair of shoes in the moonlight. "I could not leave you without them, Madge."

"Leave me!" repeated the child, starting up and seizing her brother's arm as though she would hold him fast.

"Hush! hush! or you will spoil it all," he whispered, "and it's for you I'm going, too;" and laying his head upon her pillow, Philip Eckert wept bitterly. Madge wept too, till Philip

raised his head, and putting his arm about her said, more quietly, "Well, now, I am ashamed of myself,—tears will never do; don't cry any more now, please, Madge, but be a brave girl, and hear me through."

"I will try," answered the child, choking back her sobs and nestling closer to her brother.

Then Philip spoke. He told her what she but too well already knew: that their father had become a *miserable drunkard*, and that thus disgraced, he (Philip) despaired of ever rising to respectability or happiness. "For, do you know, Madge," he continued, speaking bitterly, "he tracks me wherever I go, and claims all my earnings,—and I may

toil early and late, only to see all go for *drink, hateful drink.* I managed to get these shoes by doing overwork, of which he knew nothing,—but I can't stand it any longer."

In vain Madge entreated him, in her childish way, to take heart again, and patiently wait with her for better days.

"Not here, not here," Philip answered, almost impatiently; "there's no chance of any better days ever coming to us *here,* and you would not think so either, if you knew *all.* 'It's the last straw that breaks the camel's back,' and this last is what drives me away. How would you like to see me standing all day long dealing out liquor to the miserable wretches around us—me, your brother, Madge?

and that's what they want me to do. Father and *she* mean to open a drinking saloon, and I am to wait upon their customers. What would mother say, do you think?" and again the boy's voice grew husky with emotion.

Madge made no reply; what could she say? And as a neighboring clock sounded out the hour of midnight, Philip rose, and walking over to the narrow casement, looked out into the soft moonlight. There was a touch of tenderness in his voice when he spoke again.

"It's the only way that I can see, Madge," said he, going softly back to her; "I have made up my mind, I *must go away;* but I will come back to you, and we may be happy yet."

"And poor father,—for he is our father, Philip, though a—a—drunkard."

"He has chosen his lot," replied the boy, bitterly; then added, after a pause, more gently, "Mother told me to take care of you, little one, and I can't see beyond that yet."

"But will you be sure and come back to me?"

"Never fear; I would work both my hands off sooner than not come back; but you must wait. And now go to sleep; I shall be off before daylight,—and you don't know where, if any one inquires. But nobody cares for me but you, Madge,—so kiss me, and say one little prayer for me before I go away;" and the strong boy knelt by his little

sister, while she, with many tears, murmured her childish prayer and blessing. And we know that "not one real prayer ever yet lost its way, nor one answer from Heaven either,—only it may be long in coming."

III.

Little Madge.

WHEN Madge Eckert awoke, the sun was shining brightly in at her little window, and she wondered how she could have slept so late. Starting up, a feeling, as if something dreadful were about to happen, came over her, and burying her face in her pillow, as the scene of the past night came vividly back, she realized that she was left indeed alone. The days which followed were dark days to poor little Madge. At first, but little notice was taken of Philip's

absence. "He'll be glad enough to sneak back again before long," said the unnatural father, with a sneer; but when more than a week went by, bringing no tidings of the wanderer, the father's anger was roused. What did the boy mean by going off just when he might have made himself useful?—if Madge did not tell where he was hiding himself, she should suffer for it. And when the frightened child denied all knowledge of her brother's place of concealment, Mrs. Eckert suggested "starving it out of her." "Bread and water were only too good," she said, with a coarse laugh, "for such a stubborn little fool!"

Slowly another wearisome week passed by; and as Madge, cold and hungry,

crept away, night after night, to her lonely garret, did she still pray for her cruel father? Yes, for she remembered who had said, "Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

Her heart was very sad, but there was no bitterness there; she forgave, as she hoped to be forgiven; and the prayers of the suffering child ascended to God with the "prayers of all saints," for none are excluded—"the weak, the trembling, the fearful, the unbelieving; those of but little grace, and of tried circumstances, even their prayers, presented in the name of Jesus, fill heaven with their fragrance."

And oh, how many wonderful answers to prayer will the future yet reveal! Not just such answers as were looked and

hoped for, perhaps, but just such as the clearer light of the other world will show to have been meet.

Pray on, little Madge!

A few weeks after Philip's disappearance, Mr. Eckert summoned his little daughter before him, and with many harsh words, and even threats, demanded to know "where the young scamp had gone?"

Of course Madge could not tell; but her repeated protestations of ignorance only increased her father's anger; and finally, swearing that he would search till he found him, even if he never came back again himself, the wicked man left the house in a towering rage.

Seeking to escape the abusive language

of the affrighted wife, who now blamed Madge for all that had happened. The trembling child crept away to her little garret, there to weep and pray. Days then weeks, of painful suspense went by, and still no tidings of either father or brother. Many long, wakeful hours did Madge pass each night, wondering where they were, and if they would ever return; and ere long the continued anxiety began to tell upon the already unnerved child. Her strength failed her, and, weak and ill, she sought her pillow, only longing to die.

But He who "stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind," thought upon the suffering child, and softened the hard heart of her step-mother toward her.

The woman's conscience was aroused, and, fearing for the child's life, she nursed her many days almost tenderly. And, better still, the kind Saviour himself drew near the lowly bed and comforted the little sufferer, strengthening her feeble faith, and enabling her to "lie passive in His hands," and patiently wait the fulfillment of His promise: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

"What a peaceful nook it forms when we can retire out of circumstances into God himself, and find repose in a patience that never tires, a power that nothing can resist, a wisdom that nothing can escape, a love infinite and inexhaustible!"

"Oh!" as good Dr. Owen has said,

"oh, that we could in all our trials lay ourselves down in these arms of the Almighty, His all-sufficiency in power and goodness! Oh, how much of the Haven should we have in our voyage, how much of Home in our pilgrimage, how much of Heaven in this wretched earth!"

IV.

Working his Way.

WHEN Philip Eckert stole away at early dawn, leaving little Madge behind, a sense of desolation came over him, as he stood a moment in the doorway irresolute, looking out into the cold, gray morning light. His purpose was to get away, it mattered little where, or how far, if only beyond the reach and knowledge of the parent who had brought such a blight upon his young life; but there were conflicting emotions in his breast as he turned away

—feelings of bitterness toward him who should have been his protector and guide —feelings of anxiety for the little sister, left to suffer and endure alone—and a vague hope, followed by a half formed prayer, that the God of his mother and sister would be his God, and yet bring light out of all this darkness.

Almost unconsciously Philip turned his steps in the direction of a great Western railway station; and though the day was but just breaking, the stir and noise on every side convinced him that an early morning train was about to start. Passengers were constantly arriving; and while the men, hurrying to and fro, scolded over their baggage, their flurried and anxious wives, followed by their lout

half-awake and fretful little ones, pressed into the cars.

Above all the din rose the loud voice of the baggage-master, calling out for some hand who failed in making his appearance. Already the warning bell had been rung; but a few moments more and the great engine would start forth on its long journey, and Philip looked anxiously at the huge pile of trunks yet to be stowed away.

"Lend us a hand here, boy! there's no time to lose," cried the baggage-master, catching sight of Philip, who, always ready to oblige, sprang lightly on the car and lent his aid most willingly. Again a shrill whistle, a straining movement, and the heavy wheels began to turn

slowly round; another moment and the whole train would be woke up to life and motion.

"Now off with you, my boy," said the baggage-master, slipping a bit of silver into Philip's hand. But Philip hesitated; a second of time and his resolution was taken.

"Let me go with you a little way," he said; "I would rather than to take the money."

"Well, keep it to pay your fare with," replied the other; "and if it won't take you far enough, you may help me here with the baggage, for I'm short a man to-day."

Philip was more than satisfied; he liked the idea of *working his way*, and

he performed his part well. After all had been arranged to the entire satisfaction of the good-natured baggage-master, Philip was left alone; and then, for the first time, he fully realized his position. Climbing upon a great packing-box, the poor boy laid himself down wearily and tried to think. He had talked bravely to little Madge about going away, and had endeavored to "look boldly into the shadowy future;" but the excitement of starting over, alone, and almost penniless, no wonder that the untried world before him looked somewhat drear.

The only one he loved already separated from him by many long miles, with no one left to care for him in all the wide world, Philip Eckert would have given

much in this hour of desolation to be able to look up with confidence to Heaven, and place himself fearlessly in his almighty Father's hand for guidance and protection. He knew that the promise, that "all things" should work together for good, was only for those who love God; and his own heart told him there was no real love there. Naturally possessing many noble qualities of mind and heart, Philip Eckert yet lacked the "*one thing needful.*" His troubles had not led him to the only true source of peace; they had rather embittered his young spirit; and though he had not wholly cast off the fear of God, but still repeated the prayers once learned at his mother's knee, and carried with him now a little

Bible, well marked by the same loved hand, still his heart was not right with God, and he knew it. While little Madge could wait patiently for the Lord, and rest peacefully upon His word of promise, Philip's spirit chafed against the roughness of his lot, and chilling doubts of God's goodness and love crept into his heart.

But God's love for us is not bounded by our faith and confidence in Him, else how would we be left to stumble on the dark mountains of unbelief and perish there? The hand which we so often put from us blindly, still holds for us the "cup of blessing;" the love which we so strangely doubt, still enfolds us in its warm embrace; and when, like the prod-

igal. we come to ourselves, and arise and return, we find that our Father's heart has ever yearned over us with love and tenderness even when we were "'way off in a far country."

V.

The Kindling Wood.

OVERCOME at length by weariness and sorrow, Philip slept a long deep sleep, until aroused by a rough but friendly shake, and a loud voice exclaiming, "Here we are! do we part company now, my boy?"

"Where am I?" asked Philip, starting up and gazing about him dreamily. "I do believe I've been asleep."

"I should think so," laughingly rejoined the other; "it's well-nigh to noon: and if you take many more such naps,

you'll soon find yourself at St. Paul's! But whither bound, my boy!—not running away from your mother, I hope?" and the clear blue eye of the questioner was fixed inquiringly on Philip's face.

"If I had a mother, I shouldn't be here," he answered, sadly; "I believe I'm doing nothing wrong, sir; I want to go West, and find work; how far will this take me?" and he drew the bit of silver from his pocket.

"Not far, to be sure; but let me have it, and I'll see to your ticket," said the other, kindly; and hastening away he soon returned with a brown paper bag, which he thrust into Philip's hand, saying, in his own abrupt way, "There, now.—you look hungry; eat something,

—then go into the second car. Here's a ticket for N——; I hope you'll find work there. God bless you, my boy!—good-bye."

It was a little act, that of the good baggage-master; yet is not the great aggregate of our happiness or misery made up of *little acts?* A word, a look, has sometimes shaped a human life. Oh, how should we strive to make our *little acts*, acts of love and Christian charity? remembering that even a "cup of cold water" offered from love to Jesus, shall not lose its reward.

One little act of thoughtful kindness turned the whole current of Philip Eckert's feelings, and gave a brighter coloring to everything about him. He

felt like thanking God and taking courage. Finding his way to a forward car, the boy began to look out upon the beautiful country through which he was passing, with feelings of interest and curiosity. Everything was new to him; and as with the fading day the long train moved slowly into the town of N——, Philip really regretted that his journey was ended.

During his ride (boy-like) he had indulged in many pleasant day dreams; but now the sober realities of life, in the form of questions such as these, presented themselves: "What am I to do next? Where shall I find a shelter for the night?" A cold, drizzling rain was beginning to fall as Philip stepped from

the car; and again a feeling of loneliness and desolation crept over the boy's spirit as, with his little *all*, in the shape of a small bundle on his arm, he turned down the broad street—sadly thinking that in all that great town there was no one to know or care for him. But he had made his first start in life—he must neither falter nor turn back—and with a real manliness of spirit he commenced at once to look about him for something to do; and a boy who is not afraid of honest labor will generally find with the will, a way.

True, Philip felt stiff and tired after his long ride; but he must work or beg. "And I'll never beg," he said, half aloud, as he walked along, "while these

two hands can earn me honest bread." Bravo, Philip!

Sitting down for a moment to consider which way to direct his steps, a large pile of kindling-wood on the opposite side of the way attracted his attention. "Perhaps I might put it in," thought he and, hastening across the street, he asked the question. "Yes, if you can do it afore dark," said the servant-maid; "and a quarter's all you'll get for it—them's my orders."

"I'll do it for that," said Philip. "It will pay for a lodging, at least," thought he, going to work with a right good-will; and as the street lamp at the corner was lighted, he carried in the last stick.

"Here's your pay, boy," said the girl,

following Philip into the street and looking sharply about; then noticing how very weary the poor fellow looked, her heart softened toward him (she was often tired herself), and bidding him "wait a bit," she disappeared, but speedily returned, bringing a sandwich and a great red-cheeked apple.

"Eat 'em as you go along," she said, kindly; "they'll set you up agin;" and Philip received them from her rough hands gratefully. Being ignorant of the streets, he walked far ere he succeeded in finding a lodging for the night, and it was but a poor one at the best; but so worn and weary was the boy that night, he would have slept upon a plank.

VI.

Remembering the Sabbath Day.

PHILIP'S slumber was heavy and deep, and might have extended far into the morning, had not a shrill voice aroused him at an early hour, bidding him "be up and off." "My lodgers always quit before six," said the woman of the house, half apologetically, as Philip bade her a civil "Good-morning" as he passed her, on her knees, scrubbing off the door-step.

She was a hard-featured woman; life had evidently been with her a battle; yet

she paused a moment in her work, and, wiping the water from her hands, pointed down the street toward a large brick building, saying, in reply to Philip's questions, "If you don't find work there, you'll find it nowhere. Work's dull, hands are plenty, and money's dreadful scarce." It was poor encouragement, Philip thought; but ere the weary day was over, he found her words to be but too true. "Nothing doing at present—no boys wanted." It seemed to be the same everywhere; some manufactories even had placards in their windows with "No boys need apply," in large letters.

As Philip stood, quite disheartened, looking wistfully up and down the principal street, his attention was attracted

by the eager tones of two men near him, engaged in conversation.

"It's no use," remarked the older man, "it's just no use at all. What with the old woman scolding and the youngsters crying for bread, I'm clean beat out. Let's leave the place entirely—we can't be worse off nohow."

"But something's better than nothing; and so long as we can make salt for our porridge, I think we'd better hold on here," responded the other, rather more cheerfully.

"Hold on if you like," returned the first speaker; "but my mind's to go, and go I will. I've heard tell of work at Union—steady work and good pay; and if you'll take my advice, man, you'll

start with me to-morrow, so as to be on hand early Monday morning to run your chance."

"My wife," replied Bill, "God bless her! would never hear to my making such a start on a Sunday. She'd say I'd never prosper. I'm no better than I should be, Jones, but I've always tried to keep the Sabbath, for her sake mostly. She often says, 'If we keep our Sabbaths holy, Bill, they'll keep us holy;' so I can't join you, though I wish you success with all my heart."

Philip had stood an unobserved but deeply interested listener to this brief dialogue. He, too, had heard something of a new manufactory at Union. Perhaps he, too, might find work there. How he

wished he might set out at once! but daylight was already fast disappearing and he knew the village to be several miles distant.

"Too late," thought Philip; "I must wait till till—when?" and with the mental query came a host of other thoughts and questionings, surely perplexing him.

"If you wait till Monday," suggested the tempter of his soul, "you may lose your only chance." "And yet," whispered the voice of conscience, "'twould not be right to start on the Lord's day. 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.'" "But you are only a stranger here," urged the evil one. "'And the *stranger* that is within thy gates,'" repeated conscience. "But what will

you do with yourself all day to-morrow? You surely might just as well be quietly walking along the road to Union as to stay idling away the time here. Where's the difference?" persisted the tempter. "*If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing my pleasure on my holy Day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.*" What brought these words of Sacred Writ, learned years before at his mother's knee, so suddenly to Philip Eckert's mind. Perchance little Madge was at that moment praying—"In all times of

temptation, good Lord, deliver him." However that may be, with "thus saith the Lord," the tempter fled, and the voice of conscience was heard once more, distinct and clear: "The Sabbath is the Sabbath everywhere. Give God his day, you need not idle it away. Do as your mother would have you, Philip. Keep it holy, keep it holy." "I will," said Philip, replying aloud to his faithful monitor; and starting from the revery into which he had fallen, he turned and walked quickly down another street.

VII.

The Little Merchant.

WHEN Madge was able to leave again her lonely chamber, where she had passed so many weeks of suffering, her pale, thin face and feeble step failed to elicit any expression of sympathy from Mrs. Eckert. She looked upon her, now that all danger was passed, as a poor sickly child who might become to her a burden and expense, and her manner grew still more cold, her words harsh and severe. But Madge was a grateful child, and with returning

health and strength, she sought in every way to show that the unusual kindness received during her illness had been appreciated, and could never be forgotten.

Many were her acts of thoughtful kindness; and when Mrs. Eckert suggested that as she was quite old enough now to earn her own living, she should start out with a "variety basket," as she termed it, Madge gladly acceded to the proposition, hoping in this manner to be able to add something to their now scanty store.

The poor child found it much easier to buy her threads and needles, her pins and tapes, than to sell them. She met little girls with just such baskets at

almost every corner — and often they spoke rudely to the timid child, and drove her away; and many a time did she return to her comfortless home without a penny in her pocket, only to be sent supperless to bed. Madge could not understand why they should be so very poor. Her little garret room had been rented to a blind organ-grinder, who paid regularly and well, and Mrs. Eckert had plenty of shop work; still, one after another, the old pieces of furniture Madge had loved so dearly for her mother's sake, disappeared from their only room, which she now shared with her stepmother, and from which she could scarcely catch a glimpse of the bright stars. They seemed so far away now,—

yet Madge knew they were still there shining for her, though she might not see them, and the thought cheered her.

Her first great sorrow having led her to Jesus, all her subsequent trials but drew her closer to His side—

"For every path, the sunlit and the dim,
The flower strewn, as the thorny way, alike have led to Him;
And she had sweetly learned, by knocking at heaven's gate,
The meaning of one golden word that shines above it, —'Wait.'
For with the Master, whom to serve is not to ride or run,
But only to abide His will,—*well waited is well done.*"

Gradually the truth broke upon the child's mind, that the same fearful habit which she feared had already wrought her father's ruin, was fastening its cruel

chains upon his weak-minded and unhappy wife. With no religious principle to control or restrain, Mrs. Eckert was seeking to drown present sorrow in that which would at last but sink her down into deeper woe.

Oh, what strange infatuation! what worse than childish folly! and yet multitudes on our every side are daily, hourly, falling victims to this dire destroyer. Who has not seen "constitutions broken, families impoverished, fair characters blighted, and many a young, strong, healthy man brought to a premature and dishonored grave by means of *strong drink!*" Still the young continue to jest and sneer, and talk of moderation and self-control; but, alas! ere

they are aware, the arch deceiver has drawn them within the charmed circle of his fatal snare, and marked them for his own.

VIII.

The Basket Upset.

ONE evening, after a very unsuccessful day, little Madge returned home, weary and discouraged, to find their already comfortless room stripped of almost everything, and her step-mother sitting, her head bowed upon her hands, listless and despairing. She looked up as Madge entered, and stretched out her hand eagerly for the few pence for which she waited, that she might quench the fiery thirst which now consumed her.

"We'll be leaving this place to-mor-

now, child," she said, as she rose and took down her bonnet; "and if you want to go with me, you'll have to do better than this. You're not worth your bread and butter," she added, counting over the pennies in her hand.

Little Madge sighed, but made no reply. As Mrs. Rickert opened the door, she started up, saying, anxiously, "And what if a letter should come from Philip?"

"He won't be likely to write again in a hurry," she replied.

"Oh, tell me, has he ever written?" exclaimed Madge, catching hold of her dress.

"As to that," she said, stopping a moment as she caught the imploring look of the child's eyes—"as to that, a letter

came when you was sick. It was for—for—your father," she added, hastily, turning away her head.

"Oh, what did he say? where is he? may I see the letter?" begged Madge, the tears starting to her eyes.

"The letter's lost, and I don't remember what he said. I've enough else to think of;" and pulling away her dress from the child's hands, the miserable woman hurried from the door, leaving Madge to weep over her disappointment in solitude and darkness.

Never had a winter seemed so long, so cold, so dreary to little Madge. No more letters came from Philip: not that he failed to write, but moving, as she was constantly obliged to do, from place to

pleas they never reached her. Though but a child in years poor Madge was fast growing old in feeling and experience; and well was it for her that her "infant mind had opened under a *pious mother's influence*, hallowing it by heavenly ties before it met the rough contact of earth." Though surrounded by poverty and vice, she still walked pure and blameless, for He who took the little ones in his arms and blessed them, ever followed her with an eye of tenderness and compassion, and threw around her His protecting arm of love. Oh, what a blessing, in this world of sin and sorrow, to have such a friend as Jesus!

The tedious winter was drawing to a close. The cold, rough winds died away;

the days grew longer; tiny blades of grass began to show themselves here and there; and soft buds covered the bare branches, filling the heart of little Madge with fresh hope.

People seemed more willing to open their doors to her now; and venturing again into the broad streets, she sought the spacious mansion before which she had stood on the last night of the old year.

It was yet early, and the fresh morning air felt chill to the thinly-clad child; her hands were numb and cold, and seating herself for a moment on the lower step, she rubbed them briskly together; but she had not observed that at the door stood a news-boy with his morning

papers; nor did she notice him till, with one kick of his foot, the rude and mischievous urchin had sent her basket, with all its contents, rolling over the pavement. A loud ha! ha!' was his only reply to her cry of dismay, and in another moment he had disappeared around the corner. There was nothing left for the poor child to do but to gather together again her little stock—now soiled and scarcely fit to offer for sale.

As she wiped away her tears, a knock at the window caused her to look up. A pleasant-faced gentleman stood there looking down upon her; and as he beckoned her with his hand, Madge took up her forlorn-looking basket and slowly ascended the steps.

"That was a bad, wicked boy," said the gentleman, himself opening the door; "has he spoiled all your things?"

"I am afraid so, sir," replied Madge, the tears again blinding her eyes; "only here are some pins, if you'd like to buy them,—the paper's dusty, that's all."

"Well, come in, and we'll see about them," he answered, kindly, leading her into a warm, sunny little room where a bright fire blazed on an open hearth.

As the child held out her hands before the glowing fire, and thought how nice it was, the door opened, and a beautifully dressed lady entered the apartment.

"Well, really, my dear," she exclaimed, glancing at Madge with surprise, "who will you bring into the house next?

Peddlers and beggars of every description—you seem to have lost your common sense, or at least your sense of propriety."

"Now, Agatha," interposed her husband, gently, though the color deepened on his cheek as he spoke, "do not judge hastily. This little girl has met with a misfortune this morning, and a very serious one to her. Just look at her basket now; all her little what-nots spoiled, only the pins, and you'll want to buy some of the poor child, I am sure."

"Oh, certainly, buy what you please," replied the lady, coldly, "only don't keep the child standing here any longer than is necessary;" and she turned to the window. The gentleman looked dis-

appointed, and Madge thought she heard him sigh, as he took several little articles from her basket and laid them on the table. And then, after inquiring her name and residence, he turned once more to the lady, who still stood looking out upon the street.

"Do you not think you could find some one to look into this case?" he inquired. "She says she has no mother, Agatha."

The lady turned her head, and glanced again at little Madge, but the look was still cold and indifferent; and the bright room seemed to the child to grow gloomy and chill.

"I'll go now, if you please, sir," she ventured, timidly, taking up her basket

and looking toward the door; and she breathed more freely when she had gained the street.

Alas! instead of bearing one another's burdens, how often, by our self-love and cold indifference, do we rather add to their weight!

"It is among the ignorant, the out-of-the-way, the common-place, that our daily lot is thrown; and these daily appeals should be to us as sacred as those which come more seldom, and with a louder knocking at the gate."

IX.

The House Empty.

THE dollar which the kind gentleman pressed into little Madge's hand, as she left his door, had been more than sufficient to replenish her little basket; but though she often thought gratefully of him, the remembrance of the lady's cold black eyes and haughty look kept her from venturing again near the stately mansion.

Day after day she followed the same weary round, sometimes meeting with success, more often with disappointment;

and night after night, returning to her comfortless home, the sight of her wretched step-mother would often drive away sleep from her eyes, and fill her heart with anxious forebodings. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." Madge had learned this sweet lesson of faith; and in her darkest hours, when gloomy fears for the future would assail her, she was enabled still to look up with confidence to Him who says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

It was a soft May morning, and the early birds were twittering to each other gaily on the house-tops, as Madge, with her basket on her arm, stepped forth into the warm sunshine. Everything about her seemed joyous and glad, and the

child's heart gave a bound of pleasure as she inhaled the morning air, and listened to the merry music of the chirping birds. Could she but hear from Philip, how happy would she be! and she sang softly to herself as she walked along.

It was later than usual when she returned home that night, and what was her surprise to find their basement quite empty and deserted! Madge looked about her in bewilderment—then setting down her basket, hurriedly mounted the high, rickety staircase, and groped her way along the dark passage to the room of a poor cobbler, whose wife had sometimes spoken kindly to her, and many a time had offered her a meal. For the poor ofttimes evince more real sympathy

for their brothers and sisters in distress, and more cheerfully share with them their scanty store, than those upon whom God has bestowed an abundance of this world's goods, but who fail to recognize themselves as God's stewards, forgetting that to whom "much is given," of them will be "much required."

With breathless haste Madge told her story, and learned, in return, that her step-mother had been seen to leave the house with another woman about noon, after having first sent off to the pawnbroker's the few articles of furniture the room had contained.

"I much mistrust, my dear," added the cobbler's wife, "if you ever set eyes on her again; but I reckon you'll be no

worse off." But harsh and unfeeling as Mrs. Eckert had shown herself toward little Madge, the child had still clung to her; and she now shed bitter tears, feeling, as she did, quite deserted and alone.

"Don't take on so, child," interposed the kind-hearted cobbler. "The good Lord will care for you if you look up to Him; and till He opens some better way, wife, suppose we give the poor child a corner with us?" And so it was arranged between them; and as little Madge lay that night upon the cobbler's bench, her head pillowed on a roll of leather, she looked out joyfully again at the silvery stars, and they seemed to whisper, as of old, their voiceless words of love, soothing her to quiet slumber and peaceful dreams.

X.

The Bible-Reader.

ONE rainy day, as Madge sat binding shoes with the cobbler's wife, a plainly-dressed but kindly-spoken woman knocked at the little attic door, inquiring for a child called Madge Eckert.

"That's my name, ma'am," said little Madge, starting up, while the bright color overspread her usually pale face.

"Ah, then, I've found the right place," said their visitor, taking the chair Madge offered her, and looking with interest upon the child as she stood before her.

"Do you remember this card, my dear?" she asked.

Madge recognized it at once as the card upon which the kind gentleman had written her address.

"I have called here at Mr. Monroe's request," she continued, turning to the cobbler's wife. "He feels much interested in this child, and I would thank you to tell me something of her history."

"It's little I know," replied the other; "she's been with us scarce a week, and she's a still sort of child, too; but I'm mighty glad if the Lord's raised her up a friend; and doesn't He say, 'When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then the Lord will take thee up?'"

"The Lord is ever faithful," responded

the Bible-reader—for their visitor was one of those good Christian women sometimes found in our great cities, who, following in the footsteps of their Divine Master, continually go about doing good; seeking to relieve both the bodily and the spiritual wants of their fellow-men. "And we know that humble, loving, faithful efforts can never be made in vain; what is done as unto the Lord, the Lord wlil deign to accept. Come here, little Madge," continued the good woman, drawing her to her side, "come here, and tell me about your mother."

There was something so tender in her voice, that the child's natural reserve was overcome, as in low trembling tones she related her short but sorrowful story.

There were tears in the good woman's eyes, too, as the child ceased.

"May your heavenly Father watch over you, my child!" she said, as she rose to go, "and do better for you than any earthly father could do. Keep up a good heart—the Lord will provide," and, stooping, she kissed her tenderly.

"What makes you cry so?" asked the cobbler's wife, as the sound of their visitor's footsteps died away in the long passage; "I should think you'd be glad enough to find another friend,—they're scarce enough most times about here."

"I am glad, indeed," replied the child, struggling with herself to be calm, "but no one has ever kissed me before since—since—Philip went away."

"Poor heart, poor heart! who would have thought it?" murmured the other to herself: and a tear fell upon her work, a tear of pity and tenderness.

If we find that our own troubles and sorrows render us more sympathizing toward others in distress, may we not hope that they are working out for us a good and gracious result!

But a short time elapsed ere the good Bible-woman's tap was again heard at the cobbler's door.

"'Circumstances are the voice of Providence,' my friends," she said, seating herself among them; "did not I tell you the Lord would provide?" And drawing a letter from her pocket, she proceeded to read, without preface or explanation:

* * * "And now I must tell you what has been on my mind for a long time. Ever since my little Mary was taken from me, I have felt that perhaps there might be in your great city some motherless child whom the Lord intended should share in our love and home. We would not nurse our grief to the selfish exclusion of all thought for others; and if our Master has a work for us to do for any one of His little ones, we would not turn away from it. I know you are much among the suffering and sorrowing—could you send us a child to take our little Mary's place?"

As she ceased reading, and folded up the letter, she looked at Madge and smiled.

"Where is this place, *ma'am*?" the child asked, eagerly.

"Quite a good way off, my dear: far out West."

"Out West?—oh, I'm so glad; may-be I might find Philip!"

"Perhaps you might; but the West is a great country; do not count upon it with too much hope, though, certainly, there is a possibility. I can not say *chance*, for I believe all these things are ordered. You must trust the Lord."

"Oh, yes," said the child, with a trustful look; "and when may I go?"

"Just as soon as we find some one to take charge of you on the journey."

"I'll get her ready any day," interposed the cobbler's wife; "but we'll be

loth to part with the child,—she's been like a bit of sunshine to us, and just no trouble at all."

"May the Lord reward you for your kindness, my friend!" said the Bible-woman, taking her hand; "remember, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, . . . ye have done it unto Me."

A few weeks found Madge Eckert pleasantly settled in her new Western home; and, strange though it may seem, but a few short miles now separated her from her long-lost brother. And where was Philip? and what had he been doing all those long, weary months? Let us look back and see.

XI.

A New Friend.

"THE most trivial incidents often decide the life. With how unconscious and undivining a step may we enter a path which shall direct the whole future of our lives;" and so it was when Philip Eckert decided to heed the voice of conscience; which bade him "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." Having thus resolved, he set out once more in search of work, and before night had succeeded in earning his supper, and a small sum besides. Seeking again his

previous lodgings, he told the woman of the house, quite frankly, of his disappointments, and also a part of the conversation he had overheard respecting the manufactory at Union.

"Why did you not start at once?" she inquired.

"'Twas too late in the day."

"And will you go to-morrow?" she asked, quickly.

"No," said Philip, speaking slowly and decidedly, "not to-morrow; though this will hardly pay for two nights' lodging," he added, musingly, counting over the change in his hand. "Couldn't I do some work for you?" he inquired. "I'd like to stay here over to-morrow, if you'd let me."

"So you shall," she replied, in a voice which had lost all its harshness; and a tear glistened in her eye as she added, "You're right in trying to keep the Sabbath, my boy. Them that tries to keep the law of God is happier and best off in the long run. They ain't always the richest, but they keep a clear conscience, and that's worth more than gold or silver."

Oh, from how much of misery and suffering would Philip have been saved had he but treasured these homely words in his memory, and carried their spirit into his every-day life!

The chiming of the Sabbath bells fell pleasantly on Philip's ear as he started out the next morning in search of a place

of worship. Somehow the familiar sound carried him back to by-gone days. He seemed to see again the old gray-haired sexton tolling the village bell; and then his thoughts wandered from the church to its shady graveyard, where his mother was sleeping her last quiet sleep, all undisturbed by the wanderings of her boy.

"Oh, mother, mother!" sighed Philip, "why did you go and leave us?" and the tears gathered thick and fast.

Shrinking from observation, Philip stepped within a low doorway, and stood watching, with an aching heart, the happy groups wending their way to the house of God. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, passed him, all

unheeding.—"and I am all alone," thought he.

"Poor boy! how sad he looks!" remarked a lady, in a low, compassionate tone, as she passed by with an elderly gentleman; and she half turned her head to look at him again, but Philip had drawn back again within the doorway.

"What a kind, sweet face!" was his thought, as he resolved to watch for it when the service was ended. When the bells had ceased ringing, and the people were all gone by, Philip emerged from his hiding-place; but he dared not enter the church, his clothes were so shabby, and the sexton at the door looked so cold and forbidding.

The anthem of praise swelling out on

the morning air reached the boy's ear and moved him strangely; then all was still, and he knew they were at prayer. Philip had forgotten to pray that morning, but he felt now like seeking, with the worshipers within, a Sabbath blessing for his own soul. "I wish I was a better boy," thought he. "I wish I was a Christian. Mother was, and I do believe Madge is, too, though she is so little, and I am almost sixteen; but I don't believe I ever shall be. I'm so afraid of being laughed at; and I've got nobody to show me how. Oh, dear!" and the boy sighed drearily. But they were singing again, and Philip could almost catch the words; the tune was a familiar one, and he hummed it over softly to himself as he sat

upon the stone steps: then rising, he paced up and down before the church until the organ pealed forth again its closing strains. Hastening away, Philip partially concealed himself again within the sheltering doorway, while he watched eagerly for the one face which had so impressed him by its sweetness.

"I guess they've gone back some other way," he said to himself, regretfully, as the crowd passed by him. "Oh, no; there they come now, and that gentleman with the white necktie must be the minister;" and never thinking that he should be observed, the boy came out from the doorway and stood upon the sidewalk. As they approached leisurely, he had time to scan each face, but "[illegible]'s at-

tracted him the most; it was sad and subdued, but its expression was one of love and sympathy, and Philip longed to hear her voice. As her glance fell again on Philip, she addressed a few words in a low tone to the clergyman, who immediately offered his arm to the old gentleman and crossed the street, leaving her standing alone by Philip's side. In the brief conversation which followed, an outline of his history was gained, and a promise obtained from the stranger boy to spend the afternoon with his new friend in the Sabbath-school.

Oh, "how great, how unutterable, the amount of blessing that may follow, not walking the earth in a solitary, exclusive abstraction, realizing that each lit-

man being is a brother! These slight occasions may open a door through which both personal and relative happiness may endlessly follow."

XII.

Marion Harcourt.

MARION HARCOURT'S was "a life rising through earthly blight and disappointment toward high spiritual perfection, the flowers of individual love dropping off to give place to a ripe universal charity."

During the fearful struggle which so recently convulsed our fair land from North to South, one dear to her as her own life had fallen while bravely defending his country's flag; and a few weeks later the harrowing tidings reached the

already stricken household, that an only son and brother had suffered a martyr's death in a far-off Southern prison.

The first feeling of these crushed and bleeding hearts was, with the patriarch of old, "Surely all these things are against me;" but one has very simply and beautifully said, "When you are afraid of God, fly to His arms;" and here these broken-hearted ones, ere long, found rest and peace. Hidden in the "secret place of the Most High," "which is the very heart of God," no evil could touch them, for God "is a refuge and strength, a very pleasant help in trouble."

"Christ has different schools for His disciples, in all of which He is instructing them on earth and training them for

heaven;" and having passed through His school of trial and endurance, Marion Harcourt came at length to sit patiently at the feet of her Divine Master, learning lessons of loving service; and in the ministry of love she found a healing balm for her anguish; in turning away from her own grief to lift the burden from other breaking hearts, she was met by the "angel of patience," who—

"Walketh throughout our world of woe,
With messages of mercy to mourning hearts below. . .
To soft and tearful sadness He changed her dumb despair,
And soothed to deep submission her storm of grief and care."

It was this growing feeling of tenderness and compassion toward the sorrowing that led Marion Harcourt, that bright

Sabbath morning, to turn aside and offer words of kindness and sympathy to the lonely stranger boy; and when Philip Eckert sought his pillow that night, it was with a light heart and a hopeful spirit. He had met with real Christian sympathy; and "till we have reflected on it, we are scarcely aware how much the sum of human happiness in the world is indebted to this one feeling, *sympathy*." Philip lay awake a long while, thinking. That had been a Sabbath-day long to be remembered by the friendless boy; and the hour especially passed in the Sunday-school was one he thought he should never forget. "No, he would always remember those faithful words, and perhaps some day he might

become a real, true Christian. But not just yet," thought the boy. "I must understand more about it, and there is time enough; I've got so much to think of now;" and, like Felix, determining to wait for a "more convenient season," Philip allowed his thoughts to revert to the worldly prospects of the morrow. "How strange," thought he, "that the proprietor of that great manufactory at Union should be Miss Harcourt's cousin! If she writes me that note to-morrow morning, I shouldn't wonder one bit if he took me. I hope he will, and I mean to try to do my best; and may-be he'll tell her some time, and then she'll be glad she gave me a helping hand. I'm glad I didn't start to-day, anyhow, it's all

turned out so well. I guess it is always best to do right, and I always will." Ah, Philip, Philip! good resolutions made in your own strength will prove like the "morning cloud and early dew."

Followed by the good wishes of the poor woman who had so kindly sheltered him, and the gently spoken "God bless you" of Miss Harcourt, Philip set out the next morning for Union; but it was almost noon before he came in sight of the little village. And scarcely a village could it be called, either. The manufactory was by far the most conspicuous building, and apparently the chief object of interest in the place. The small, low-roofed, unpainted houses were clustered about it in an odd, irregular manner,

and from each door a narrow beaten pathway ran up the hillside to the huge building at the top, which stood like a proud monarch frowning down upon his poor dependents.

As Philip turned his now weary feet into one of these little by-paths, the great bell sounded out the hour of noon, and soon scores of men and boys were scattering over the hill in every direction.

"Now's my time," thought Philip, as, taking Miss Harcourt's note from his pocket, he looked around for the main entrance. Before what appeared to be the office was fastened a fine black horse, which pawed the ground impatiently; and in the doorway, watch in hand, stood an elderly gentleman, looking

down the road with equal signs of impatience.

"Mr. D. Hart, sir?" said Philip, inquiringly, taking off his cap as he met the gentleman's keen glance.

"Yes," he replied, holding out his hand for the note, which he read carefully. "I'll see what can be done for you," he said, turning on Philip a scrutinizing gaze; "but stand aside a moment," he added, as a plainly dressed man approached.

"How's the boy now, Smith?" he inquired, glancing again at his watch.

"The doctor's just through, sir," replied the other, looking much annoyed; "it's a bad break, I fear—a very bad break!"

"Then you'll want another boy immediately, and here's one I've a mind to try. You're in the nick of time," he continued, addressing Philip, "and may count yourself lucky; I should have had a dozen applications before night;" and springing upon his horse he rode rapidly away, before Philip could collect his thoughts sufficiently to thank him.

"I have found you a stopping-place," said Smith, the foreman, to Philip, as they left the factory together, at the close of the day. "Dan Stone, the boy who fell and broke his arm this morning, and whose place you've got, is my nephew; and his mother is willing to take you to board cheap, if you'd like to go there. It's not far, there—that little red house

down in the hollow. You might as well go at once, as I've spoken for you ;" and turning off in an opposite direction, Smith left Philip to introduce himself at the Widow Stone's cottage.

XIII.

Dan Stone.

PHILIP ECKERT stood a few moments hesitating before the cottage door, then raising the brass knocker, he rapped once—twice—three times without receiving any answer. Pushing open the door, which stood slightly ajar, he entered; and glancing around the small, dingy room, his eye fell upon a low bed, on which lay the widow's son. There were marks of suffering on his colorless face; and his eyes, when he opened them and looked up at Philip, had a faded,

sickly look, and such a disagreeable expression withal, that Philip avoided meeting their glance again, as he tried to inquire kindly how he felt.

"What's that to you, I'd like to know?" responded Dan, gruffly. "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. To step into my shoes is all you care a straw for, I'll warrant;" and continuing to mutter angrily, he turned his face to the wall.

"No wonder he feels cross, poor fellow," thought Philip, walking over to the open window and looking out; and when the Widow Stone entered the room he turned, and addressing her respectfully, expressed the hope that he should make her no trouble.

"I've had naught but trouble since I can remember," she replied, in a melancholy voice.

Poor Widow Stone was one of those much-to-be-pitied individuals who ever look on the *dark side.* Her thin, unhappy face was wrinkled less by time than worry; and the habitual whine of her voice was most disagreeable to hear. She always "doubled the anxieties of to-day by adding those of to-morrow;" and she had never learned to cast her cares upon Him who careth for us; or to rest her burden upon His heart who "was never known to cast a sorrow back again."

And she had her troubles, too, real *heart troubles;* her greatest grief now

being occasioned by the undutiful conduct and wicked ways of her only son. Ah! many a boy has broken his loving mother's heart!

Philip Eckert had been blessed with a tender Christian mother, and his best and sweetest recollections were of her; and sometimes when he listened to Dan's rude, insulting words, and witnessed his unreasonable demands upon his mother's time and strength, he could hardly restrain his indignation; but so long as he could withdraw to his own little room, matters moved on in comparative quiet.

As Dan grew better and his arm stronger, he began to talk of returning to his own room, which Philip had taken.

"There's room enough for two beds,"

said he, "and I'm tired to death of being down here."

Though Philip said nothing, Dan saw very plainly that his company was not desired, and he delighted in annoying him. He disliked Philip most cordially. He had been jealous of him from the very first. Dan had been much disliked in the factory. Philip was becoming a general favorite, Smith said, and his good manners and correct habits were a constant reproof to the wicked boy. He hated him, and would gladly have made him as bad as himself.

"Just wait till I get about again," he often muttered between his teeth, "and I'll run him off the track before he knows it!"

Sinners are never satisfied with wrong doing themselves but are constantly on the watch, like the great enemy of souls, to draw others after them into evil.

"For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.—*Prov.* iv. 16.

"You'll have company after this," said Dan, with a low laugh, as he followed Philip up stairs one night: and throwing himself down upon his bed with great satisfaction, he added, "and I'm clear of the old woman too—she can jaw away now to her heart's content."

"Oh, Dan Stone! how can you speak so of your mother?" exclaimed Philip, flushing up and speaking hastily.

"Just shut up, will you?" retorted

Dan, angrily. "I don't want none of your fine talk, and you needn't think to come that game over me now;" and kicking off his shoes, he began to whistle, while Philip walked over to the casement and looked out.

It was a beautiful night, and the soft moonlight streamed far into the room, and fell upon Dan's bed.

After a time the whistling ceased, and Philip thought his rude companion slept. He hoped so; for though he despised Dan thoroughly, he feared to kneel down before him in prayer. He lacked the *moral courage*. He waited a while longer, then spoke—"Dan, Dan! He must be asleep," thought Philip; and kneeling at his own bedside, he repeated first

the simple prayer learned in his childish days, then a few words of his own; but

"To say the words is not to pray,
Unless we mean the things we say;"

and in Philip's heart there was no real approach to God—no sincere desire for pardon of sin—no earnest seeking after Divine assistance and guidance. His prayer was rather that of the Pharisee, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men."

As Philip rose from his knees he was startled by a loud "Ha, ha!" from Dan. "So we've got a praying parson, ha, ha! What do you charge for your pious example?" he sneeringly inquired, with another coarse laugh; and continuing thus to scoff and jeer, he so exasperated Phil-

ip, that, forgetting all his wise and good resolutions, he hastened to his side, and shaking his fist in Dan's face, exclaimed, passionately, "Stop this, I say, or I'll make you!"

Dan knew he could do it, and, fearing his anger, dared only to mutter under his breath that a "praying parson and a fighting parson wouldn't go together."

Philip understood the taunt, but was too much excited to heed it. "I'll never hear the end of this," he thought, as he lay down heated with passion and false shame. "He'll blab it all about among the boys, I know; but I'll be more careful in the future, and say my prayers in bed. Where's the use of exposing myself to ridicule?" Thus weakly compro-

mising his principles, and yielding like a coward to the fear of being laughed at. Philip Eckert took his first step in a path which was to lead him far on in the road to ruin.

"Dark and dangerous is the way,
When you once begin to stray;
They who would be truly free,
Must the *first temptation* flee."

XIV.

The Ways of Sin.

SIN is but a very little word—"easily spoken, soon written—but of what mighty and solemn import! *Sin* is the cause of all evil, the source of all sorrow, the spring of all suffering." Allow but *one little sin* a lodgment in the heart, and how quickly will a host of others gather around the door and clamor for admittance! Take but *one step* in the wrong direction, and how soon the path of right and duty is lost sight of, while the but too willing feet hasten with ever-

increasing speed down the broad road leading to destruction!

Poor Philip had thought that his feet stood firm; but they were planted on the sandy foundation of his own strength, rather than upon the "Rock of Ages;" and when the tempter assailed him at his weakest point, he yielded and fell.

Secretly exulting over him, Dan resolved that night to seek by ridicule and sneers to undermine his Christian principles, and draw him within the power of his evil influence. He saw his power over him, and resolved to use it. This wicked boy, now almost seventeen years of age, had long been a ringleader among the mischief-loving boys of Union.

Was an orchard to be robbed, Dan

Stone was sure to be in for it; was some poor man's melon-patch to be rifled, Dan led on the rest; and when an unprincipled man opened a low drinking-saloon in the village, he was the very first to enter it; and many a sixpence which should have gone into his poor mother's purse, found its way behind the bar. The painful accident to his arm had, for a time, put an end to all this; but the wicked boy was only longing to be well again, that he might return to his evil ways. The pain and suffering sent upon him in warning had served only to harden his heart; and the devil found in the miserable boy a willing servant for the carrying out of his own evil designs.

By degrees he succeeded in gaining a

wonderful ascendency over Philip; who, while he disliked and despised Dan, came to be strangely influenced by him. It is extraordinary what power and influence a really wicked person will sometimes gain over other minds! but, oh, what a fearful account will such a one be called upon to render at the last great day of reckoning! They not only refused to enter the way of life themselves, but those who were entering in, "they hindered," and their blood shall be required at their hands.

It must not be thought that Philip Eckert cast off all fear of God at *once*, or became at a *single bound* the reckless boy a few months found him. Oh, no! it was *step* by *step*; the change was a

very gradual one; and many a time, especially during the stillness of the night, would thoughts of his mother come over him, bringing bitter tears of *remorse*, not of repentance. After such seasons of painful reflection, resolving to do better, he would stealthily brush away the dust from his neglected Bible and read a chapter, but hurriedly and prayerlessly—for Philip dared not pray. He thought it would seem a mockery; but certainly "there is no degree of sin or folly that can make it wrong for us to cry out—'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'" But Philip clung to his sins. He feared man rather than God. The laugh, the sneer, the finger of scorn, the smile of derision were more

dreaded by the foolish boy than the warnings of conscience or the admonitions of God's Word; and farther and farther he wandered.

The Fourth of July was near at hand, and Dan and Philip were laying grand schemes for the approaching holiday. Most of the working people of Union were going to the town, and stages were to run between the two places till late at night.

"Now's our time, Phil," said Dan, confidentially, "for a *regular bender*. We'll have a high old time—we'll raise the very wind—and won't go home till morning, eh?"

Philip's ideas as to what constituted a "*regular bender*" were not very well

defined; nor did he care to inquire into it, so long as any *fun* was promised him. Long before the break of day the surrounding hills were made to resound to the noisy mirth of the Union boys; and ere the long day was over, Dan and Philip had squandered all the hard earnings of the week. Dan had drunk often and freely, and Philip began to feel almost ashamed of his rude and boisterous companion. "What if I should meet Miss Harcourt," thought he, as the remembrance of her former kindness and of her two unanswered letters passed through his mind. He was tired and unhappy; he had found no real pleasure in the noisy mirth of the day; and when Dan proposed a visit in the evening to a

low play-house (a place Philip had never entered), he hesitated—and finally refused, upon the ground of headache and weariness.

"Oh, it will rest you," urged Dan; "don't be a baby, now; why, the fun's only just begun. You're not the man I took you for if you give out in this kind of way."

Afraid of being laughed at, Philip yielded, and followed his tempter into the theater (a place, alas, which has proved to be, to many a youth, the very gate of hell). But the light, and music, and gay surroundings failed to enliven Philip as he sat by Dan's side gloomy and spiritless. Memories of the past haunted him strangely, and he started

THE DRINKING SALOON

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when the curtain rose, as though awakening from a painful dream.

A burst of applause greeted the gay young ballet-dancers as they moved lightly and gracefully over the stage, and for the moment all seemed like some fair scene of fairy-land. But, suddenly, a pause—a scream—the music ceased,—all started to their feet. The thin gauze dress of a giddy dancer had, alas, swept too near the footlights—another moment and it was all ablaze. The scene which followed can be better imagined than described. The cries of fire, the swaying of the crowd toward the doors, the screams of terrified women and children, all combined to render it a fearful one indeed. Poor Philip in his bewilder-

ment was thrown down and trampled upon. Insensible and bleeding, he lay long after the house was cleared, Dan having selfishly deserted him and started for home, wickedly resolving to say nothing of what had occurred; hoping to secure for himself again his former place in the factory should Philip fail in making his appearance the following day. But in this he was disappointed; for although Philip did not return, Dan's application was refused, his bad character arousing the suspicion that he knew more respecting Philip Eckert's sudden disappearance than he chose to tell.

Finding the current of feeling at Union setting in so strongly against him, Dan Stone determined to leave the place alto-

gether; and heartlessly forsaking his mother, he set out to seek his fortune in another and distant State.

And we need not follow him thither.

FIRST
M.E.S.S.
OTTAWA, ILL.

XV.

The Hospital.

WHEN Philip Eckert was discovered in an apparently dying condition, it was deemed advisable, as he appeared to be a stranger and friendless, to remove him at once to the county hospital, situated about a mile from the town. Here the best medical treatment was afforded the young sufferer, who slowly and painfully struggled back to life.

But as consciousness returned, and all the past—the guilty past—rose up before

him, his distress of mind became almost unendurable. His physical sufferings were very great, but could not compare with the anguish which rung his very soul. His near approach to death had swept away every "refuge of lies," and his sins stood forth in terrible clearness,—sins against his conscience—sins against his God—sins willfully persisted in—sins without excuse; and no one spoke to the almost despairing boy of hope for the fallen, of pardoning love and grace. But He who in infinite mercy had borne with the erring boy through all his wanderings, still looked upon him with an eye of tenderness and compassion. A believing mother's prayers were yet to be answered.

One afternoon, as Philip lay with closed eyes and compressed lips, and a look of intense suffering upon his white face, he felt a soft touch upon his arm. As he looked up, the sweet, tender face of Miss Parcourt bent over him, and again he met her eyes of love and sympathy. How her look pierced his very soul! Yes, all her goodness, too, had been forgotten; her kind advice and counsel disregarded; and turning away his head, the hot tears rolled down his cheeks, while his breast heaved with emotion.

"I'm so sorry for you, Philip," was all she said; but her voice was low and tender, and Philip felt how utterly unworthy hewas of her gentle sympathy.

"It's his mind more than his body,

ma'am," observed the nurse, who just then approached with a soothing draught. "Perhaps you'd cheer him up a bit; and he does suffer dreadful, too, with his hand, poor lad; you see as how he lost two fingers, ma'am, in the crush."

"Miss Harcourt," said Philip, in a tremulous voice, when the kind-hearted nurse had turned away, "you see what I've come to. You were kind to me, but I didn't heed your warnings; I forgot all your good advice, and I feel as if God had justly given me up."

"'Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord.' 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as

snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'" repeated Miss Harcourt: and when, after a few more encouraging words, she rose to go away, Philip looked up imploringly, as though all light and hope would go with her.

"I'll come again to-morrow," she said; "my father is waiting for me now; but you must promise me to think over this one verse till I come again;" and she handed him a little card containing these precious words—

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—*John* iii. 16.

"I've been thinking about it ever since," said Philip, eagerly, as his faithful friend seated herself the next day

near his low cot; "but it only makes me feel the worse."

"Feel the worse," repeated Miss Harcourt, "feel the worse to think of God's great love?"

"Yes, for it makes my sins so much the greater. I knew all about it before. My mother (and the boy's voice trembled)—my mother taught me; but I've despised it, I've trampled on it, I've done more wrong things than you could think of. The love is for such as you—but not for me."

"It says '*whosoever*,'" replied Miss Harcourt, simply. "'*Whosoever* believeth—*whosoever* will, let him take the water of life freely.'"

"Do you really think it could mean

me?" and the boy looked up eagerly into her face "*me*, who am so unworthy?"

"Yes, without doubt it means *you*. He says, 'Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.' Go to Him, Philip. The longer you stay away, the more you grieve His love. He came to seek and save the lost. 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all sin*.'"

Earnestly did Miss Harcourt pray that the Spirit of all Truth would enlighten his mind, and lead this trembling sinner to the Fountain opened for "sin, and uncleanliness, and every transgression."

There was a marked change in the boy's countenance when she saw him

again. The anxious, almost despairing look was gone, and he smiled as she asked, "And what have you done with your sins, Philip?"

"I've laid them on Jesus," he replied, "and I think He's taken them all away. I believe *that whosoever* did mean me; oh, how good He is! I didn't just know how to go to Him, so I told Him all; and He seemed to come right to me. I wish I could be a Christian—now, right away—so as to please Him, and follow Him always."

Miss Harcourt did not say "You are a Christian, Philip;" she would not for a moment turn his thoughts away from Christ. If God was filling his soul with love and peace in believing, it was

enough. Salvation was already his through faith in Jesus; so she simply said, "Jesus Christ can make you all you desire to be; only keep fast hold of His hand, Philip. Oh, how thankful you should be that He has drawn you to Himself!"

After a time Philip came to understand more clearly what it was to be a Christian,—even to trust and love as he knew of God and realized Him to be. He found that all was of grace, and that it was the most joyful experience of a young heart. If we open ours we will find His [illegible]

[illegible]

should sin again, and thus wound afresh his precious Saviour, caused him to shrink from the prospect of going out again into the world to meet its temptations and snares.

"I am so ignorant and weak, I fear I may fail," he remarked one day to Miss Harcourt, who replied, encouragingly, "But you must remember, Phil, it who says 'My grace is sufficient for thee: My strength is made perfect in weakness.'

"It is true," she continued, "Christians do sometimes fall into sin and thus bring the holy name of Jesus into reproach, but why do they? Is it not because they neglect to watch and pray? They grow to trust to their own strength instead of to the Lord, which

would hold them. *Self-confidence* draws away their gaze from their Lord and Saviour, and losing sight of Him, no wonder they stumble and fall. 'The great secret of a holy and of a happy life is contained in a small compass: *walking humbly with God*;' and 'if God be for us, who can be against us?'

"My God with me in every place!
Firmly does the promise stand,
On land or sea, with present grace
Still to aid us near at hand.
If you ask—'Who is with thee?'
God is here,—my God with me.

"My God for me! I dare to say—
God the portion of my soul!
Nor need I tremble in dismay
When around me troubles roll.
If you ask—'What comforts thee?'
It is this,—God is for me.

"In life, in death, with God so near,
Every battle I shall win,
Shall boldly press through dangers here,
Triumphant over every sin!
'What!' you say, 'a victor be?'
No, not I, but God in me!"

C. E. ZELLER.

XVI.

"Mrs. Wentworth's Home."

AS Philip Eckert gained in health and strength, the time approached when he must leave the hospital to enter again upon "the strife which, in an infinite variety of shapes, awaits those who have the heart and will and conscience to fight a battle with the world."

And not life's battle only, but the Christian warfare was now before the young soldier of the Cross,—a warfare with sin and temptation,—a warfare in which, doubtless, he would receive many

wounds and scars, but from which he would come off at last victorious—"conqueror, and more than conqueror through Him that loved him."

"The doctor says he will soon be able to give me my discharge," remarked Philip one day to his kind and faithful friend; but though he spoke cheerfully, Miss Harcourt detected an expression of anxiety on his face.

"You look a little troubled, Philip," she said, gently. "Is not the prospect of returning to active life again a pleasing one. You must be hopeful, my dear boy, and try to say—

'Where'er my path
On earth shall lead, I'll keep a nesting bough
For Hope, the song-bird, and with cheerful step
Hold on my pilgrimage.'"

"It's going back to Union that troubles me most," replied Philip, frankly. "If only I might find something to do *here*, so as to keep near you, Miss Harcourt, I shouldn't feel so afraid; but I dare not trust myself."

"Nor would I have you do so, Philip; but, dear child, I could not keep you any more than you could keep yourself. God, and God alone, must be your strength and helper."

"I do trust in God," said Philip; "but it seems just as if He sent you to show me the right way, and I am sure you could help me to keep in it."

"Perhaps I might," replied Miss. Harcourt, musingly. "Perhaps my Master has given me this work to do for Him; I

will think it over, Philip," she added, "and consult with my father; perhaps some arrangement may be made by which you can stay."

"Oh, how kind you are!" and the tears started to his eyes; "I would not like to give you any trouble; but I'd be willing to work ever so hard, if only I might be near you, Miss Harcourt."

She little knew what her sympathy had become to the friendless boy; but as she looked into his eyes, beaming with gratitude and affection, she felt that a new responsibility had been laid upon her, and realized as she never had before, that the *talent of influence* was one for which each and all must one day render a strict account.

Through Mr. Harcourt's influence, an excellent situation was at length obtained for Philip, with a respectable druggist, where an opportunity for learning the business would be afforded him, if after the first year he should prove himself worthy of encouragement and confidence.

"How can I ever thank you, sir?" said Philip, very warmly, when Mr. Harcourt himself announced the good news.

"I will tell you," replied the old gentleman, kindly. "By endeavoring to do your duty to your employer faithfully—conscientiously. Carry your religion into your work, into your daily life, and thus you will let your light shine before men, and may God bless you! I am an old man, and can look

back over nearly four-score years, and all that way has the Lord led me; and I would say to you, my son, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'"

"I am no longer surprised at your interest in that lad, my dear," said old Mr. Harcourt to his daughter after his interview with Philip. "There is something so manly and ingenuous about him, that one feels attracted at once. If the right influences are thrown around him, I doubt not that, with God's blessing, he will develop in time an earnest and decided Christian character; but he is very young—we must look after him,

Marion, and lend him our aid. When will he go when he leaves the hospital?"

"I was just puzzling over that very question, father; how I wish we might obtain a place for him in 'Mrs. Wentworth's Home!'"

"The very place for him, Marion, the very place," responded the old man, warmly, rubbing his hands together with delight.

"But her house is always so full," interposed Miss Harcourt; "yet, now as we speak of it, I recollect when I saw her last, she mentioned the probability of losing one of her 'dear boys,' as she calls them. It was young Harris, the one whom she nursed through that fearful illness last fall, you recollect, father.

He thinks of going farther West. It would certainly be well to inquire into the matter; I will see her at once."

"Mrs. Wentworth's Home" deserves something more than a passing notice; and perchance a brief account of this worthy woman's self-denying efforts in behalf of a class too little cared for, may incite some Christian mother or sister to go and do likewise. Mrs. Wentworth was early left a widow, with a large and unencumbered property. Being singularly alone in the world, with none dependent on her, she nobly resolved to devote herself to a life of benevolence and Christian charity; and sincerely desiring to be led in a plain path, she humbly inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou

have me to do?" and by a remarkable chain of circumstances she was led in the course of a few months to establish an institution which very soon became known as "Mrs. Wentworth's Home."

It was, in fact, a large and extensive boarding-house conducted on the noblest Christian principles, and established solely for the benefit of such young men and boys as may be found in every large city and manufacturing town: young men, friendless—orphaned—strangers; just such as fall an easy prey to designing men; just such as on every side sink one after another into dishonored graves, because no one cared for their souls. To such as these, Mrs.

Wentworth became at once mother, sister, and Christian friend.

She ruled her household by the law of love, and in a few years her "Home" had become a most honored institution. This "Home" was a great hobby with good old Mr. Harcourt. He had fitted up, at his own expense, a fine gymnasium for the use of the young men; and to many had he extended a helping hand in business,—many who now held in the town positions of respectability and influence. And it was to this "Home" that Philip Eckert was ere long introduced. Here he found, not only care and protection, but Christian sympathy and love, and his first year passed only too quickly away.

XVII.

"Wine is a Mocker."

"IT is very strange where the boy could have gone to-night," remarked old Mr. Harcourt, uneasily, rising and walking for the third time to the window, and looking out into the street. "It is a fine night, and he appeared to be so much interested in his books; but boys will be boys, you know, my dear, and it is too late for him now;" then ringing the bell for his servant, after once more looking out into the night, the kind-hearted old

gentleman withdrew from the library, leaving his daughter alone. Yes, it was strange. For a whole year Philip had not failed to meet her father every Saturday evening, and after the lessons were over, to hold a quiet talk with her, whom he regarded as his spiritual guide and truest friend. And he had more than repaid them for all their efforts in his behalf. He already stood high in the esteem of his employer, and his example and influence at the "Home" were all that could be desired.

Where could he be to-night? Surely he would not stay away for a slight cause. Could he have been surprised by some sudden temptation, and left to fall? and Marion Harcourt breathed an

earnest prayer, that wherever he might be that hour, God would remember him in tender mercy.

Alas! how often when we think our feet stand firm, do they tremble on the verge of evil! How should we make it our constant prayer—"Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe!" As all men began to speak well of Philip, a feeling of self-sufficiency had unconsciously crept into his heart; and as he contrasted his last year with the reckless course of life that had preceded it, he felt (and it was true) that a great change for the better had come over him; but it was all of grace, and to God alone belonged the praise. While Philip acknowledged this with his lips, in his

inmost soul there lurked a feeling of self-righteousness, which led him to place his dependence more and more upon his own arm of flesh. Thus loosening his hold of the gracious hand which led him, he walked in his own strength, forgetting that the enemy of his soul, ever on the alert to trip up the feet of the unwary, still followed him.

Philip Eckert had set out early in the evening for Mr. Harcourt's, with pleasing hopes and bright anticipations. He was doing so well with his studies, who could tell how high he might yet rise? He thought he felt thankful to God for all his goodness, but he was even more pleased with himself for holding on so well. "I've had my trials and temptations,

too," thought Philip, as he walked along the quiet street; "but I've learned to say No. I shall never fall back again, I am sure!"

Turning a corner just at this moment, who should confront him but his old friend (if friend, indeed, he might be called) Dan Stone!

"Why, really Dan," said Philip, extending his hand quite cordially, "you are the very last person I should have thought of meeting to-night. How are you?"

Philip thought he could afford to be magnanimous. Dan returned the grasp of his hand, and taking him by the arm, as in their boyish days, wheeled him suddenly about, talking all the while

with much volubility. Dan appeared quite the gentleman. His clothes were new and stylish, though he displayed rather more jewelry than altogether accorded with Philip's taste. But he made himself very agreeable, never referring to the past, except to congratulate Philip upon his improved appearance.

"I hardly knew you, old fellow," he exclaimed; "you really are quite another man."

"Yes, in more senses than one," was on Philip's lips; but he checked the words, as the old fear of Dan's laugh awoke again in his breast. "Of course he'll see I'm very different from what I used to be," thought Philip. "There's no use in telling him; actions speak

louder than words,"—and he answered Dan lightly and jestingly.

Dan had so many wild adventures to relate (more than half of which, however, were imaginary), and, withal, made himself so pleasant and entertaining, that a full hour passed before Philip thought of his lessons.

Wheeling Dan about in his turn, Philip said, laughingly, "And now you must go my way, for really I had forgotten an engagement this evening."

"Can't you break it for the sake of 'old lang syne,' Phil?" returned Dan, in a half injured tone.

'No, I can not break it;" and Philip gave Dan a hurried account of the kindness he had received from Mr. Harcourt

and his daughter; and spoke gratefully of the interest they manifested in his education.

"Oh, ho! you've got in with the grandees and big bugs, have you?" sneered Dan; "and that's the reason you'd cut your old friends! Catch me tying myself down like a baby to say my A B C to any stupid old—philanthropist, I suppose he calls himself, or saint of a woman either! Philip Eckert! I really thought you had more spirit. It is rich, though, and if you like it, why, go ahead, of course; only I haven't had half my talk out;" and he drew Philip's arm still closer within his own.

Oh, why did the hot blood rush to Philip's temples, and why did his voice

falter as he said, half apologetically, "They mean it all in kindness, Dan,—you don't understand them; but I don't care if I miss once.—I can explain all the next time."

"Explain!" repeated Dan, derisively, seeing his advantage, "don't stoop to explanations: are you not your own master! Be done with such folly, and think no more about it. Oh, here we are," he added; "I'm hungry and thirsty. An oyster stew, with a little something to wash it down, will start you all right again, my boy!"

"All wrong again," something seemed to whisper in Philip's ear; but he suffered himself to be led into the saloon.

"Oysters for two, and a bottle of your best champagne!" ordered Dan, with a flourish.

"Dan, you know I never drink," began Philip.

"I know you never did; but you're quite old enough now to enjoy these good things with moderation, you know. A glass occasionally will never hurt you—only stop when you've had enough. There's no danger,—just look at me, now;" and as Dan seated himself at the table opposite Philip, and fixed on him his small gray eyes, in which still lurked the same old sinister expression, Philip felt as though he were caught in a net.

"Really, Dan, you must excuse me to-night," he faltered.

"For friendship's sake, Phil," said Dan, coaxingly, as he poured out the sparkling wine.

"No, no," said Philip, pushing back his chair and half rising.

"Now, or never," thought wicked Dan Stone. Bending over the table, he hissed in Philip's ear—"Coward—coward!"

"You know I'm not," roared Philip, turning very pale; "take it back!"

Ah, was he not a coward!

"I repeat it," hissed his tempter. "Philip Evert, I dare you!"

Philip rose, pale and trembling, and stretched out his hand for the glass.

"Brave!" shouted Dan, as he drained the poisonous draught; "another, and I'll take back every word."

Again Philip pressed the wine-cup to his lips, while Dan clapped his hands and laughed approvingly.

"The die is cast," he muttered under his breath. "I've got you now, my boy,—but 'twill not do to go too fast," thought he, as Philip bowed his head upon his hands and groaned.

"Not used to it, eh?" he said, half mockingly; "it's apt to make one a little dizzy at first, but 'twill pass off soon; and I'm glad to find you've got some pluck; you'll come out yet all right."

"All wrong," again whispered the voice in Philip's ear, as he rose with throbbing head to seek the air.

"Head ache a little, does it, dear?"

continued Dan, taking him by the arm and uttering a low derisive laugh as they walked along.

Philip felt strangely bewildered, and but for Dan's arm could hardly have kept upon his feet.

"I'm bound to see this thing through," thought Dan. "How the old man would open his eyes, and the girl too, could they see the dear child now! 'twould be a good joke. I believe I'll take him there, and I warrant he'll never darken their doors again."

"Philip," he began, in an insinuating voice, "I can't help feeling rather sorry for the old gentleman to-night. Do you suppose, now, he's waiting for you still?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. What time is it?" inquired Philip, absently.

"Too late for lessons, I fear, but not too late to stop a moment and apologize. You always were the gentleman, Philip; and it's as well perhaps to keep on their right side. You'll walk off this little dizziness by the time you reach there; then my advice would be (and you know I'm your friend, Phil), to stop a moment (just to please them, you understand) and make an excuse—say you met an old friend, who detained you. You needn't stay a moment, you know, my dear fellow."

Had not Philip's brain been somewhat confused, he would never have acted upon such a suggestion; as it was, he

hesitated a moment before ascending the steps; but Dan's decided "Go ahead, and don't keep me standing here all night," urged him forward. As the door closed behind him, Dan chuckled exultingly.

"Now you're done for, my pretty fellow," he mentally ejaculated. "I've brought you down a peg or two, I reckon. It's only wiping off old scores, you know, for didn't you step into my shoes when I couldn't help myself?" and giving a prolonged whistle of satisfaction, he began pacing slowly up and down before the house, occasionally casting an eager glance toward the door, and wishing, oh, how much! that he could see through it.

Could he have done so, his feelings of

satisfied revenge would speedily have vanished before those of disappointment and chagrin. But we will leave him pacing back and forth uneasily, and follow Philip into Mr. Harcourt's library.

XVIII.

A Kind Friend.

AS Marion Harcourt sat alone, her thoughts wandered far back over the past, and tender memories of the loved and lost came thronging about her sadly.

"Sorrow is God's school. Take all sorrow out of life, and you take away all richness, and depth, and tenderness! Our Christian character is not finished so long as God has anything left for us to suffer."

"An hour in our life will surely come

when we shall be enabled to say that we have not had one trial too much, not one that could have been spared;" and Marion Harcourt found consolation in the thought.

As Philip entered the quiet library, she rose, and smiling her usual welcome, held out her hand. "We were quite troubled about you, Philip," she said. But he made no reply to her kind greeting as he stood before her with flushed face and downcast eyes. In an instant the truth flashed upon her mind; and looking searchingly into his face she said, in a tremulous voice, "Oh, Philip, Philip, I fear you have been drinking!" With a stifled groan the unhappy boy turned away, and walking to the window

pressed his throbbing brow against the cool glass.

How long he stood there, he never knew; his thoughts were in a tumult, his heart beat wildly, and though he caught a glimpse of Dan more than once, walking uneasily before the windows, he cared not a whit,—his sin, his ingratitude, the pain and disappointment he had occasioned his kind friend and benefactress, filled him with shame and contrition; and as he thought of Him whom he had denied, he seemed to hear Him say, "Will ye also go away?"

Philip started as a gentle hand was laid upon his arm; and, turning, he met a look which revealed more than any words could have spoken.

"Please don't, Miss Harcourt," he exclaimed; "I can't bear it. Why don't you send me away? I don't deserve to have you speak to me again; but, oh! I am so sorry!" and completely overcome, the repentant boy covered his face with his hands and wept.

"And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and he went out and wept bitterly," thought Miss Harcourt; "oh, that these tears might be tears of true repentance also,—a repentance not to be repented of!"

"And now come and sit down, Philip," said she, gently, "and tell me all about it."

And Philip told her all, even of the feelings of self-satisfaction and self-re-

liance which had crept into his heart and prepared the way for the entrance of sin.

"'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.'" repeated Miss Harcourt. "You have found that you are but weak and sinful at best, Philip, and that all your strength must come from God. If this fall leads you to give up all self-dependence, and to take a firmer hold on God's almighty arm, 'twill not have been permitted for naught. You will walk more humbly now—more carefully—and keep nearer to God, I trust."

"But I am ashamed to go back to Him: how can He love me now?"

"Philip," said his faithful friend,

speaking very earnestly, "do you think that He who could draw our souls by His grace, when we were never so much as casting a look after Him, would give us up when our face was once set for Him! Does God love us for our sakes, or for Jesus' sake? Are we not 'accepted in the Beloved?'

"'And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on our souls be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.'

"'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Go to Him, Philip, confessing your sins, and resolving by His help to forsake them. 'Go, and sin no more;' for, remember, every sin is like a nail

driven afresh through those blessed hands on which we rest for salvation."

"Miss Harcourt," said Philip, after a long silence, "I have been thinking a great deal lately about joining the Church, but there's no use in speaking of such a thing now. I should feel ashamed to ask."

"Philip," she replied, "if a person has been led by the Holy Spirit to see his sins, and lay them all on Jesus, I think he should acknowledge his Saviour in his own appointed way. Because such a one is overtaken by temptation and falls into sin, I can not see (if he is truly penitent) why he should be kept from the table of the Lord, which is spread for sinners, for such as feel their

weakness and need of Divine strength. Of course, all who indulge themselves in any known sin are warned away; but the truly penitent, believing soul is invited to come, and welcome. I think it would prove a safeguard to you, Philip, and render you even more careful of your walk and conversation, if you had named the name of Christ."

"Yes,—but I fear Dan would think me a hypocrite."

"You must show him by your future life that you are sincere. 'The fear of man bringeth a snare.' If he misjudges you, recollect you deserve it, and God knows your heart. A little of self-love may still lurk under that fear, Philip."

"Yes," he replied, thoughtfully, "I

should like Dan to think well of me. I don't believe I half know my own heart, Miss Harcourt. What must it be in God's sight, who sees right through it?"

"Ah, Philip, we little know what our hearts are in His sight, before whom the angels vail their faces! how should we carry them daily, hourly, for purification to the fountain of Jesus' blood! To confess Christ before men is a very solemn thing; but it would be a step I should rejoice to see you take, Philip, in the right spirit; but first of all you should seek direction from on high. Ask humbly for wisdom and guidance. And as for Dan, who has proved himself a tempter rather than a friend, can you not do something for him?"

"How could I speak to him about religion after to-night?" said Philip, regretfully.

"Ah, how true it is," replied Miss Harcourt, "that 'inconsistency is a special work of the tempter, inasmuch as it not only destroys the good we have sought to do, but hinders us from doing more!' but do not be discouraged,—take up this cross, and bear it for Jesus' sake. I would not advise you to seek Dan, but rather to avoid him; still, if he comes to you, speak plainly and decidedly, but at the same time humbly looking up to God for direction and strength."

"I wonder if he is waiting for me yet?" said Philip.

"I hardly think so," replied Miss Har-

court, "for 'tis almost twelve o'clock. Go now, my dear boy. Carry all your burden of sin and sorrow to Jesus, and may God bless and keep you! Good-night."

XIX.

Madge Found.

"IF anything of importance should occur, you will be sure and write me," said a lady, speaking from a car window to a young man who, having arranged everything for her comfort, had stepped upon the platform and stood waiting, cap in hand, to say good-bye.

"You may depend upon me," he replied, smiling brightly.

"And look well after father," she added; "I shall feel anxious about him while away."

"I'll not forget," he said, smiling again; and as the train moved off, he stood watching it a moment, then turned and walked thoughtfully away.

One would scarcely have recognized in the well-dressed and gentlemanly-looking young man the stranger boy who three years before had stepped from the same platform into the misty rain, quite friendless and forlorn. It was Philip Eckert nevertheless; and as he retraced his steps to Mr. Harcourt's dwelling, he repeated to himself: "Look well after him—of course I will. Do not I owe everything to them? Where would I be now if they had not taken me by the hand? and how far might I not have wandered, if she (God bless

her!) had cast me off when I went astray?"

Truly, there is no way of fighting with what is wrong like helping everything good and true to grow.

"Yes, God has been very good to me," thought Philip; "and if only I might hear something about poor dear little Madge, how happy would I be! but I fear she is dead;" and he sighed heavily. Thoughts of his little sister often saddened him, and he had almost given up the hope of ever seeing her again. A strange letter came a few days after to Philip, from Miss Harcourt.

"Come to me as soon as possible," she wrote; "I have a great joy in store for you."

What was it? Could it be possible that she had heard something of Maurice? Could it be that she might be somewhere near him, even now?

How slowly the time seemed to move to Philip, who was longing for the voice of the wind! It was only ten hours since Julia left, but it seemed an interminable age to the eager, excited lover.

When at length he mounted the well-known painted gates, he was met by Miss Hammond, but usually pale face flushed with pleasure and sympathy.

"Have you heard a great joy, Philip?" she asked.

"Oh, yes—what is it?"

Miss Hammond led him into the house, and through the hall, to a little sunny

room, where she left him, as he thought, quite alone; but suddenly two little arms were clasped about his neck, while Madge's own voice murmured, softly, "Philip, my own dear Philip!"

It was a hungry meeting, that of the long separated brother and sister; and as Philip held the child in his arms, and looked again upon her sweet face, and met her tearful but hungry gaze, he pressed her closer to his heart, repeating again and again, "Never to be parted more, little one,—never, never more."

"Ah, but I have learned to call her mine, now," interposed a pleasant voice; and Philip turned to meet the kind lady who had bestowed upon his little sister a mother's love and care.

"She was mine first, ma'am; but how can I ever repay all your kindness?" he asked, with emotion.

During the long conversation which ensued, it was agreed that little Madge should remain in her present home until Philip could make arrangements to receive her in a home of his own.

"I can soon afford to rent a little wee house, Madge, and you shall be my housekeeper," said he, looking down lovingly on the child who nestled at his side.

"'Through the waves to the shore,'" thought Philip, as he returned in the evening to Mr. Harcourt, his heart overflowing with gratitude and thanksgiving. "So He bringeth them to their desired haven."

Not many weeks passed away before Philip was enabled to complete his simple domestic arrangements,—and joyfully he set out to bring his little sister home. Home,—what a delightful word!

"We're going home, little one," he said, again and again; the word home was like music to his ear. The child did not speak; it all seemed too much like some beautiful dream, which a word might dissipate.

"It's a very little cage I've got for my birdie," said Philip, playfully; but his hand trembled as he unlocked the door of his own humble home and led Madge into a bright little room, which the thoughtful kindness of his friends had rendered really beautiful.

"Oh, Philip, is it really true?" said the child, at length. "I can hardly believe it."

"Yes, it is true, Madge; and should we not thank God for it all?"

"Oh, yes, dear Philip,—now, the very first thing," answered the child, earnestly. And kneeling together, they offered upon the threshold of their new home the incense of praise from truly grateful hearts.

XX.

A Discovery.

"AND now I must leave you for a while, Madge," said Philip, after going all over the little house with the happy child; "but I'll be home, home," he repeated softly, "very early; and mind, Miss Housekeeper, and have a good supper all ready for me. Here's the key to the kitchen closet. Miss Harcourt furnished it, but she would not let me so much as peep in; so I really can not say what it contains. You'll not mind my going now, will

you ?" and, stooping, he kissed her cheek.

"Oh, no ! I shall find plenty to do," she replied, following him to the door, and watching his retreating figure, with love in her eyes and a great joy at her young heart.

But the hours wore very slowly away.

"He'll soon be here, now," she said to herself encouragingly, as the little clock struck seven ; and she walked again around the table, re-arranging the dishes and smoothing away invisible creases from the snowy cloth.

As night's dark shadows crept into the little room the child began to feel lonely and strange ; and opening the street door, she looked up and down

anxiously, but still there was no sight of Philip.

"I'll draw the shutters to," thought Madge, "and light the lamp;" but the clock struck nine before the welcome sound of her brother's footsteps fell upon her listening ears.

"Did you think I'd never come?" asked Philip.

"Almost," returned Madge, smiling through her tears; "what has kept you so late?"

"It's a long, strange story, Madge," he answered, quietly; and her quick eye detected a troubled expression on his face.

He scarcely tasted the nice supper she had taken such pains to prepare, but

soon rose to pace the floor uneasily, ever and anon glancing at the child as though anxious and yet afraid to begin his story.

"Dear brother," said Madge, "you need not tell me if you do not choose."

"But it concerns you as well as me, little one," he replied, seating himself beside her and throwing his arm around her tenderly. "We were so happy,—and now what I have to tell will trouble you so much:" and he looked sadly into her earnest, inquiring face.

"But I'd rather hear it right away: it won't be so hard to bear trouble now we are together once more; we can share it, you know, Philip, and Jesus will help us both."

"Yes, that is true,—and if you wish, I

will begin my strange story at once. I started, Madge, for home this afternoon quite early, but a business errand on the way detained me a full half hour. Wishing to shorten the distance, I turned into a poor and unfrequented street; but scarcely had I entered it when I was accosted by a wretched-looking man, who, without raising his eyes, muttered something quite unintelligible. At first I thought him insane or under the influence of liquor. A slouched hat was drawn down over his eyes, his long beard was shaggy and gray, and his clothes extremely old and worn. It was fast growing dark, and I fear I spoke rather impatiently, Madge, when I inquired what he wanted.

"'I say I'm dying,' he replied, and his hand, which he had laid upon my arm, shook violently. 'My brain's on fire. May-be you think me crazed or drunk,—but I've not had a drop to-day —though I'd sell the coat off my back if any one would buy it, for one more dram. I can't help it,' he continued, wildly. 'I'm sold soul and body; but I warn you, young man, stop before you begin—stop before you begin.' He was becoming much excited, and a crowd of curious, laughing boys had gathered round us. 'I believe I'm going mad,' he said, as I strove to quiet him. 'Must I die here in the street, like a dog? Oh, this fearful pain!' and he groaned aloud.

"'Take him to the hospital,' suggested

a by-stander; but I thought of you, Madge, waiting for me here all alone, and hesitated; but only for an instant,—for I knew you would have bidden me go—and how glad I am now that I heeded the promptings of conscience and kind feeling! There was a lad passing with a light cart, who for a trifle agreed to drive us both out to the hospital; but it was with much difficulty that we succeeded in getting the miserable man into the wagon. He leaned against me heavily, but never spoke a word during all the long, dark ride. As I led him all trembling into the office of the medical director, the light of the lamps fell full upon his haggard face (his hat had fallen off), and do not be frightened, dearest,

but he looked, oh, so much like father!"

Madge hid her face with a low cry, and drawing her closer to him, Philip continued, in a faltering voice, "Yes, he looked like our own father, Madge, only so changed, so old, and miserable, and poor. He did not look at me at all,—I hardly think he recognized me then; but when the doctor—my good old doctor—entered the office and called me Philip, father started, and quickly motioned that I should leave the room.

"When I returned, they had taken him away to the fever ward, the doctor said; and then he looked at me with some curiosity, saying, 'It is strange, Philip, but that wretched man imagines

you are like a son whom he lost sight of three or four years ago. His brain is evidently much excited; and he charged me not to tell you. Of course it's only a vagary of his diseased mind.'

"Then I told the doctor all our story, Madge, and you can not think how kind he was. He says it is a most remarkable providence that has brought us all together again; for if he (father) lives, it will be our duty, Madge, to bring him home and care for him."

"Oh, yes,—poor, poor father!" said the gentle child, forgetting all the wrongs of the past in her pity and forgiving love.

"But will he live through this fever?"

"The doctor thinks he may; but fears his mind will never be strong again. His

wretched course of life has nearly ruined him,—he is a perfect wreck!" and Philip shuddered.

"Mother used to say he was once so handsome," whispered little Madge.

"It is intemperance that's brought him down so low," replied Philip, sorrowfully; "poor, unhappy father!"

"I am to go there again to-morrow," he continued, "but I may not see him. Any undue excitement just now might occasion his immediate death; but if he grows more calm and asks for me, the doctor says it may be best to let him have his way. Oh, Madge, who would have dreamed of such an ending to our first happy day at home?" and Philip sighed wearily.

"All things shall work together for our good," replied Madge, gently; "and is not this one of the 'all things,' Philip? Perhaps God means to bring some good to poor father, too, through us, in answer to mother's prayers. Let us follow where He leads, dear Philip, just as the beautiful hymn says, that I was learning while waiting for you to-night;" and the sweet child repeated with touching simplicity and earnestness,

"A LIFE SONG.

"As God leads me, will I go,
Nor choose my way;
Let Him choose the joy or woe
Of every day;
They can not hurt my soul,
Because in his control,
I leave to Him the whole—
His children may.

"As God leads me, I am still
Within His hand;
Though His purpose, my self-will
Doth oft withstand,
Yet I wish that none
But His will be done,
Till the end be won,
That He hath planned.

"As God leads, I am content;
He will take care.
All things by His will are sent
That I must bear.
To Him I take my fear,
My wishes while I'm here;
The way will all seem clear
When I am there!

"As God leads me, so my heart
In faith shall rest;
No grief nor fear my soul shall part
From Jesus' breast.
In sweet belief I know
What way my life doth go;
Since God permitteth so—
That must be blessed."

XXI.

"The Horror Ward."

PHILIP ECKERT tossed that night uneasily upon his pillow. A conflict was going on in the young man's soul, all unseen by mortal eye, but noted by Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. The future had stretched out before him so fair and bright, and now, as in a moment, a cloud had arisen and thrown a dreary shadow over all.

"Why is this?" he murmured; "we were going to be so happy, Madge and I, and now all our plans for the future

must be changed. Our duty is plain. That poor, miserable, half-crazed drunkard is our own father, and we must care for him, though he never cared for us."

"He never was like a father to me," thought Philip; "but this is inevitable. Providence has brought him here, and I will try to do right, as a Christian."

Ah, duty is a cold word, unless linked with love.

"How forgiving Madge is!" still thought Philip; "she appears to have forgotten all the past in her one desire to do poor father good. I wish I felt so too. I fear I am all wrong;" and rising from his bed he walked to the window and looked out into the still night. Peace seemed to rest everywhere.

"If this cross is to be laid upon me," murmured Philip, "I must find grace and strength to bear it cheerfully—willingly. Oh, my Saviour, help me!" and kneeling, Philip Eckert sought and found that grace which is promised to all who seek it in sincerity. As the soft moonlight fell upon his face, there rested with it an expression of perfect trust and peace—the shadows had fled away.

"I feel there is some good reason for all this, Madge," said Philip to his sister the following day. "It is all right. But few Christians 'can carry a full cup with a steady hand.' God knows what is best for us both; and it is pleasant to think of 'each day's events as just the development of His eternal plan.'"

"Sweetness there is. I know it, Lord;
And otherwise it can not be:
It is my Father's hand that poured
This mixture in the cup for me.

"But much I fear lest my self-will,
So disappointed and so blind,
Should overlook the sweet, or spill,
And nothing but the bitter find.

Whatever be Thy gracious thought,
Let me not lose its sweet design:
Since Jesus hath the blessing wrought
On it: for His sake, may it be mine."

For weeks Mr. Eckert's life trembled in the balance. His son visited him faithfully, but days went by on any sign of recognition passed between them.

"Let him be the first to speak," said the doctor, "and let him take his own time. I am confident that he knows you perfectly, for if you stay away a night

day. I notice that he becomes restless and unhappy. It is a very remarkable case, certainly."

As the doctor left the apartment, he signed to Philip to follow him. "Were you ever in the 'Horror Ward,' he inquired, as they ascended the staircase.

"Horror Ward! No. What is it, sir?"

"A ward of this hospital where persons suffering the horrors of delirium tremens are treated. Your poor father, I doubt not, has already suffered much from this fearful disease, which is induced by excessive drinking. We had a new case brought in last night," added the doctor; and as they approached

the ward his fearful screams fell upon their ears.

"He's very violent, sir," said the nurse; "nothing seems to quiet him."

The poor creature, who had crouched down under the bed-clothes as they entered, suddenly sprang up with another wild shriek, tossing his arms about frantically.

The doctor gave a few directions to the attendant, adding; "You must bring a strait jacket at once; you'll not be able to control him."

Philip heard not a word that passed between them, but stood spell-bound, gazing upon the sufferer; and as he met the wild glaring eye, he covered his face with his hands and trembled.

"Philip! Philip Eckert!" shrieked the young man, "save me; don't you see them? they're all around me; no, don't come near me," he cried, as Philip approached the bed, "oh, don't torment me," and he hid his face again, moaning piteously.

"Come away, Philip," said the doctor, taking him by the arm and leading him from the ward. Philip trembled violently.

"I'd no thought of your knowing that young man," added the doctor; "was he a friend of yours?"

"I know him well, sir!" said Philip, with emotion; "can nothing be done for him?—poor Dan Stone!"

"I fear not,—but we will try; now

come into my office," added the doctor; "you're as white as the wall;" and pouring out a glass of wine, he bade Philip "drink." The color rushed back painfully to Philip's face, but he shook his head, saying, decidedly, but with evident embarrassment, "A glass of water, if you please."

"I didn't mean to tempt you, my dear fellow," said the kind-hearted but thoughtless doctor; "I was in the wrong, I own;" and as he handed Philip the water he looked upon him approvingly; in his heart he had never respected the young man more.

Ere the morrow's sun the spirit of Daniel Stone had been summoned to appear before its Judge.

XXII.

Madge and Her Father.

ONE day, as Philip Eckert sat by his father's bedside, a gentle-looking little girl entered the ward and turned a pitying look upon the sick man as she passed along.

He followed her with his eyes, wistfully, then fixed an inquiring gaze upon Philip, as though he would ask—"and what of Madge?"

Philip understood the look, and answered, "Madge is well, and near you, father; would you like to see her?"

A single tear rolled down his sunken cheek, but he made him no reply; and turning his face again to the wall, appeared to sleep.

"Bring her to-morrow," said the doctor, when Philip related to him the circumstance; and from that time little Madge always accompanied her brother in his daily visits to the hospital.

Some writer has beautifully said: "The good God has more weapons than we wot of, and more means of grace than are counted in any of our catechisms and confessions. The touch of a little child's hand has opened many a door through which the Master has afterward come in and sat and supped;" and gradually a change came over this

wretched father. The expression of his haggard face became more calm, his eye less restless, and he watched for the coming of his children with increasing interest, though he seldom spoke to them. But he was evidently growing weaker. His nervous system was completely shattered, and when left alone he would lie for hours with closed eyes, muttering incoherently to himself.

As the doctor gave them but little encouragement to hope that he would ever recover, Philip and Madge became very anxious to remove their father to their own home, that they might be able to devote themselves more entirely to his comfort. Their kind friend the doctor approved the plan, and facilitated this

removal; and a short time found Mr. Eckert comfortably settled in his children's home.

"I will call in occasionally," said the doctor; "but he will not require our care and attention long."

Though he rallied a little at first, he soon sank again into a state of apathy and hopelessness, scarcely speaking, except in monosyllables; and he would sit in his easy chair, hours together, whispering to himself and moaning piteously.

Miss Hatcourt proved in this time of trouble a true friend. Many a delicacy found its way to the sick man from her table; and often she cheered little Madge by her kind and sympathizing words,

though the dying man seldom appeared to notice her.

Philip was accustomed to read a chapter from the Bible and offer a short prayer at his father's side before leaving him each morning; and though her father never responded in any way, Madge observed that sometimes, after Philip was gone, he would repeat to himself, very softly, some verse of Scripture or word of prayer that had been offered.

One morning that solemn verse was read, "and the door was shut,"—and the fearful words seemed to enter the weakened mind of the sufferer, and to fasten themselves there with a strange pertinacity and power. "The door was

shut—the door was shut," he repeated over and over again, and in so mournful a voice that little Madge was obliged to turn aside to hide her tears.

"Dear father," she said, at length, taking his wasted hand in her own, "the door is open now. It means the door of heaven, you know, and Jesus has opened it wide for you and me, if we will but trust Him. I will give you another verse to say, father—'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'"

As she repeated the precious words slowly but very earnestly, a new light gleamed for a moment in her father's dull, hopeless eye, while he inquired, almost eagerly, "Does it say so, Madge—does it?"

"Yes, it's true, father—to save sinners—to save you," added the child, with much emotion.

But the light had faded away, and turning his head wearily, he murmured, "Well, that's enough—I'll think of it."

. . . . Hours passed, and still he slept. Madge moved noiselessly about the little room, fearing to disturb him; though she almost wished he would awake, for the stillness of the room oppressed her.

"How pale he is!" she thought, as she stood by his side and looked sadly on his white face, so marked by sin and suffering.

"Father?" she whispered; but he made her no reply. "How I wish Philip

would come," sighed the child, glancing up at the little clock. "Tick—tick—how strange it sounds to-day!—but he must soon be here now;" and turning to the window she awaited her brother's coming with painful anxiety.

Somehow, that still, white face frightened her—she could not tell why; and when at length Philip opened the cottage door, she clung to him, sobbing hysterically. "Oh, father's been asleep so long!" was all she could say, for weeping.

Philip hastened forward,—one glance sufficed. The head thrown slightly back—the eyes unclosed—the pale, lifeless hands, all told him but too plainly that the spirit had indeed departed.

"Run, Madge, quick, and bring some one," he faltered; then turning again to the motionless form, Philip kneeled, weeping bitterly, "Gone, gone!" he groaned, "but where?"

Oh, how unutterably sad to pass away and leave no light behind for those who mourn!

The neighbors coming in, lifted the body gently and laid it upon the bed. They closed the dull eyes and straightened the stiffening limbs; then quietly withdrew, leaving Philip alone with his dead. He stood a long, long while, gazing mournfully upon his father's form so still in death. Oh, how he longed for one word of assurance that the spirit which had now entered upon the awful

realities of eternity, had not gone forth as a wandering star—into the blackness of darkness forever—but had been received into the haven of everlasting rest!

Philip in his anguish had even forgotten little Madge; but as her low sobs now reached his ear, he started, and hastening to her room raised her from her knees and folded her tenderly in his arms. As the child became more calm, she told her brother of the last words their father had spoken; and how he had appeared to grasp, if only for an instant, the glorious truth, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

"And we will hope he received it, and rested on it, dearest," said Philip,

soothingly; "and indeed we do not know what thoughts and feelings may have been passing through his mind during all these long, dreary months. 'With God, all things are possible.' We must leave him in His hands—who can not do but right; but, oh, Madge, to think of his WASTED LIFE!"

"Nothing but leaves,—the spirit grieves
Over a wasted life,
O'er sins indulged while conscience slept,
O'er vows and promises unkept,
And reap from years of strife
Nothing but leaves.

"Ah! who shall thus the Master meet,
Bearing but withered leaves?
Ah! who shall at the Saviour's feet,
Before the awful judgment-seat,
Lay down, for golden sheaves,
Nothing but leaves."

XXIII.

Conclusion.

THE last sad rites were over; earth to earth—dust to dust—ashes to ashes; and turning sadly from their father's grave, Philip and Madge sought again their silent home.

"We're all alone now, Philip," said little Madge in a tremulous voice, as they sat together in the deepening twilight.

"Not all alone, Madge," he replied, drawing her closer to his breast; "can we ever forget who has said, 'I will

never leave thee nor forsake thee? We have proved and found Him faithful, have we not?"

"Oh, yes; we have Jesus with us always,—what a comfort! Yet I feel to-night, dear Philip, as though I could never be light-hearted any more."

"We have had much in our life to sadden us, little sister, I feel it too. But I can not doubt it is all right. Our heavenly Father orders all things wisely, and we will yet find that it was well for us to 'bear the yoke in our youth.'"

"Yes, I do not believe I should ever have known what a kind and loving Saviour Jesus is, but for my troubles," said little Madge; "nor the sweetness of prayer either."

"Nor I," responded Philip; "our trials have drawn us to His feet—and I love to think of those good words of Rutherford's—

"'When ye are come to the other side the water, and have set down your feet on the shore of a glorious eternity, and look back again to the waters, and to your wearisome journey, ye shall then be forced to say, If God had done otherwise with me than He hath done, I had never come to the enjoyment of this crown of glory.'"

"That is a sweet thought, Philip," replied Madge; "it is indeed a comfort to know that our path is all marked out for us, and that our Saviour has promised to lead us along safely, even to the end."

Communing thus together, light and hope returned to these young trusting hearts—scattering the gloomy shades of doubt and fear. Thus a mother's prayers were answered.

"'To-morrow is my birth-day, Madge,' remarked Philip, after a short silence.

"Why, so it is! and you'll be nineteen.

"Yes, nineteen; and I feel to-night as I never have before, the obligation that rests upon me, to devote myself, my life, my all, unreservedly, to the service of my Lord and Master. You can never know, Madge, the struggles and temptations of these last few years, but God has

seen them all, and it has been His gracious hand alone which has brought me safely through thus far, and I can trust Him for the future. I have learned to look away from self, Madge, to God alone, and His arm is a strong one to lean upon. I can not but believe," continued the young man, speaking very earnestly, "that God is preparing us, by His providence and grace, for usefulness in this world, and for happiness, I trust, hereafter. We have all the same hopes, desires, and aims; let us forget the things that are past, dearest, and press forward—'upward and onward—homeward and heavenward—looking unto Jesus.'"

Looking thus into the unknown future,

with humble confidence and earnest purpose, Philip and Madge Eckert laid upon God's altar that night the willing sacrifice of grateful and loving hearts. Life's journey stretches out before them dimly, but they "walk in the light of God." Varied trials and temptations have already crossed their pathway, and doubtless many still await them; but leaning on an Almighty arm, shall they not come off "conqueror, and more than conqueror, through Him that loved them?"

And when "life's journey is ended, and life's battle is won," having overcome, they shall be gathered with the innumerable throng before the throne. Shall not the victor's palm be theirs also, while their happy voices swell the song—

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood—and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Yea—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."